



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

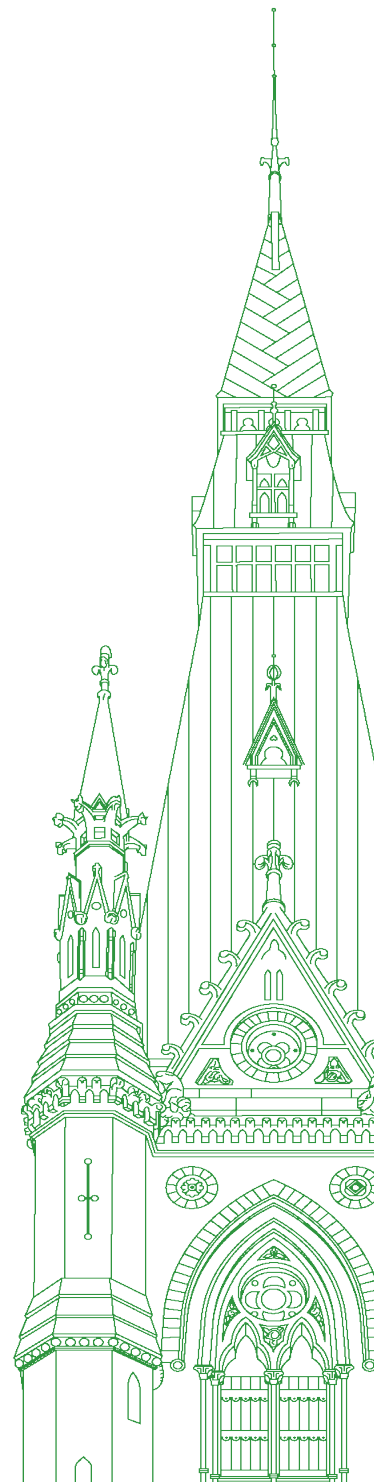
44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

House of Commons Debates

Official Report
(Hansard)

Volume 151 No. 036
Monday, February 21, 2022

Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, February 21, 2022

The House met at 7 a.m.

Prayer

ORDERS OF THE DAY

● (0700)

[English]

EMERGENCIES ACT

The House resumed from February 20 consideration of the motion.

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Madam Speaker, I want to begin by acknowledging and thanking all of the staff of the House of Commons and the interpreters for joining us today, bright and early, at seven in the morning. Today, in this province, it is Family Day, and they are here spending the day with us. I am grateful and want to thank them and acknowledge them, as well as everyone who is here with us today. We thank them for their time and for everything they are doing as we discuss a matter that I think is very impactful for our families and, really, for our family of Canada.

I also want to take this occasion to wish Her Majesty the very best and a speedy recovery. I had the honour of meeting Her Majesty. I had an audience with her the year of Canada's sesquicentennial. As one of her medalists, it was the honour of my life to have had that opportunity.

Continuing where I left off last evening, flags matter. Symbols matter, just like how our Canadian flag is a beacon of hope for so many people here at home and abroad. I was distraught, as a person who has proudly worn our flag and the uniform of our country, to see people wrap themselves in our flag and use it as a shield for their behaviour, which sometimes was anything but honourable.

What I have commented on thus far, beginning last evening and this morning, unfortunately describes in detail what I believe lay at the heart of some of those who came to Ottawa. They did not come here to register valid concerns. They certainly did not need three weeks to pretend to try to do so, and the rhetoric that spewed from their leaders did not signal a desire for dialogue. They were trying to impose their views on the nation. They were fed up with mandates, vaccines and not being able to do whatever it is they wanted. They wanted to dictate. Some even wanted to govern.

Forget about the will of the people; it was the protesters own will they wanted to impose. That is not expressing freedom. It is also a grossly uneducated view of Canadian democracy and an extremely poor attempt at implementing a coup. Our rights to freedom of expression and assembly should not and must not include the oppression of another's.

I wonder if the protesters were equally fed up with the 35,000 Canadians who died as a direct result of COVID-19 and its variants? Did those who are no longer with us die because of the common cold? Did they lose their lives because of the actions of draconian governments to stop the spread of the virus? It is disrespectful and nonsense.

This is what happens when some people are glued to Fox News and attend the university of social media. In fact, it was a Fox News commentator who went so far as to share disinformation about a protester getting hurt and dying, only to later delete the erroneous post but, by then, the damage had been done. I would like to commend the members of the Toronto Police Service's mounted unit for their professionalism, their work and the exemplary manner in which they conducted themselves. I commend all of the police services that came to Ottawa to assist in the restoration of peace and order.

Much will be said of the last three weeks and the targeted use of a portion of the Emergencies Act to peacefully end the occupation of our capital and to protect Canada's foreign trade link to our largest and strongest trading partner. People should remember that our country cannot live on beautiful scenery alone. We need good jobs. We need to protect the health of our people and the viability of our economy and our health care system.

Moreover, with every passing day, the protest was sending a signal globally that the rule of law in Canada was weak. It is not often that Canada makes the podcast on The Economist, never mind be the main topic of discussion, but we did. Instead of it being about our world-class arts and culture, our leading tech and innovation, and the many things that make our Canada, our country, great, it was about the protest. It was destroying our global reputation.

● (0705)

I would like now to focus my comments on what lies at the basis of what is being debated in this House, that being the rule of law. Unfortunately, I know a little of what it is like to be denied the rule of law. I also know what it is like to be judged by the court of public opinion, where facts are often cast aside as pesky annoyances.

Statutory Order

To the issue at hand, does the limited implementation of certain provisions of the Emergencies Act deny Canada and Canadians the rule of law? Does the act remove one's charter rights? Are the police and the military going to start searching people's homes and arresting anyone they do not like? Will Canadians have all of their civil liberties stripped away at a moment's notice by a nefarious federal government? Of course not.

In listening to some of my colleagues, it would seem that the federal government is on the verge of a military dictatorship. I have heard stories from my parents and others who actually escaped oppression. I spent hours in Yad Vashem reading, listening and learning about the systemic horrors that were endured during the Holocaust. In Ottawa, I heard protesters draw parallels between their experience in the occupation and what different oppressed communities have endured, and some, sadly, still do. I implore people who continue to do that to please stop, because they are cheapening the suffering of those who have endured oppression and much worse.

The rule of law is just that: The law rules. It rules insofar as the same laws apply to everyone, regardless of their personal circumstances, their race, their orientation or anything else.

The definition of the rule of law employed by the United Nations is quite lengthy. The term refers to "a principle...in which all persons, institutions and entities, public and private, including the State itself, are accountable to laws that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced and independently adjudicated, and which are consistent with international human rights norms and standards." Interestingly, the UN definition goes on to state, "It requires, as well, measures to ensure adherence to the principles of supremacy of law, equality before the law, accountability to the law, fairness in the application of the law, separation of powers, participation in decision-making, legal certainty, avoidance of arbitrariness and procedural and legal transparency."

The government's decision to implement certain targeted aspects of the Emergencies Act within a duration of just 30 days is certainly transparent and ensures adherence to the principles of the supremacy of the law. At no point does the implementation of the act remove the rights and freedoms guaranteed under the charter. At no point does the act usurp the powers of Parliament. At no point does the act impose some unconstitutional period of martial law.

In conclusion, what is being done with the temporary, targeted use of certain provisions of the Emergencies Act is to restore peace, order and good government through legitimate and constitutional measures to ensure that the people of Ottawa, the economy and the people of Canada are able to function without further unlawful interference and interruption.

● (0710)

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Madam Speaker, I can feel a lot of stress and tension as we debate this.

Do you respect the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, which I assume you do? I am assuming everybody—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Perhaps the member could use the word "he" as opposed to "you".

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: I apologize, Madam Speaker.

I would ask if my colleague respects the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, which I assume all of us do in the House, and how he would respond to what it said, as follows: "This use of the Emergencies Act is unnecessary, unjustifiable and unconstitutional. The high threshold to invoke the act has not been met. It is in light of all these violations of civil liberties that we will be taking the government to court." I am curious what the hon. member has to say about that.

Mr. Kevin Vuong: Madam Speaker, yesterday I was in Ottawa and wanted to patron a local restaurant, as I hope anyone would want to do if my own city of Toronto had gone through the same thing that Ottawa had. It took me 20 minutes of walking before I could find a local restaurant to support here in Ottawa.

Even a fast casual dining restaurant will have a minimum complement of staff of seven to 10 people, so imagine how many hundreds of workers were out of work. I imagine that is an opinion my Conservative colleague and I would share: the importance of supporting local businesses. How many jobs and livelihoods were impacted? How many millions in business revenue were lost? These are revenues to the treasury that support the important services that make our country what it is.

This has been a black eye on our country, and it is so vital that we move forward.

[Translation]

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Madam Speaker, I was a little offended by the presentation from my colleague from Spadina—Fort York. He repeatedly mentioned a lack of education on the part of the protesters and occupiers, saying that perhaps they had attended only the university of social media. I think that is a massive generalization. He can correct me if I am wrong, but I detected some contempt in his remarks, similar to the contempt shown by the Prime Minister.

The PM could not even be bothered to come down from his ivory tower to meet with people. That is one of the many things he has not done. I would like to know what my colleague thinks of the Prime Minister's inaction and whether it constitutes contempt for all the protesters and occupiers.

● (0715)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Vuong: Madam Speaker, again, one of the real issues I have observed walking through the streets of Ottawa is how the people have been impacted. For example, the National Arts Centre has been closed. To give members a sense of the scope, I will provide a statistic from my riding. Ms. Kendra Bator of Mirvish Productions comes from my riding, which is our country's largest theatre production company. Every dollar spent generates \$10 in the local economy. How many millions were lost as a result of the disruption by the occupation? It is so vital that we move forward so we can support Ottawa's businesses and people's livelihoods.

Statutory Order

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by adding my thanks to yours for the people who are here supporting us today.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I remind members they are to address questions to the House. Instead of using the words “you” or “yours”, she may want to say “he” or “his”.

The hon. member may continue.

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: Madam Speaker, I will do that.

I would like to begin by thanking all of the people who are here supporting us this morning and the men and women in uniform who have been working tirelessly all weekend to apply the law we have invoked. In particular, I would like to thank the York Regional Police, which was here and which serves my riding of Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill.

The member discussed the definition of the rule of law as defined by the United Nations, which I thought was very clarifying. I was wondering if there is anything in the Emergencies Act that has been invoked that the member feels in any way impedes that definition of the rule of law.

Mr. Kevin Vuong: Madam Speaker, just last evening as we were closing down the chamber, I had the opportunity to personally thank members of the York Regional Police who are here, just like the members from the Toronto Police Service and police services across the country.

As I said during my comments, it is constitutional and measured. It is a targeted use of but a portion of the Emergencies Act, which gives me confidence, as does the fact that it is only for 30 days and can be ended sooner. What is vital is that the occupation was ended so that we can move forward as a country, and so that this city can move forward. More importantly is what it means for the rest of this country, because if we do not end what happened here then it just as easily could happen in even more municipalities and communities across this country.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, right now, Ottawa businesses are allowed to reopen. The Conservatives and Bloc members have been saying that the situation in Windsor with the Ambassador Bridge and the corridor is fine, but I can assure members that even last night and this morning, as I drove along the corridor I saw that the jersey barricades we have are still blocking businesses.

I would like the hon. member to reflect on the fact that he could not find a place to eat last night, but still, ironically, Windsor businesses, health care services and other types of emergency vehicles are continue to be blocked because of the actions and the consequences.

Mr. Kevin Vuong: Madam Speaker, if anything, I think that is where my colleague and I clearly share the importance of taking action to ensure that trade can resume and can move unabated. He would know better than many how vital that connection is. Just as important as that connection is to our strongest and largest trading partner, so too is our reputation and the stain that this protest has had on it. It is so vital for foreign investment and jobs that we move forward. That is why the targeted use of a certain portion of the Emergencies Act is something I support.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, on the state of the current emergency, the member talked about the temporary nature of it and that it is going to last for 30 days. If all of the circumstances surrounding this seem to have levelled off and we are in a state where we can get back to some normalcy, would he support the revocation of the act?

• (0720)

Mr. Kevin Vuong: Madam Speaker, as I emphasized during my comments, it was very vital that action was taken so that not just our neighbours and communities here in Ottawa, but our country could move forward, with certainty and confidence in communities that have already been impacted, like Windsor, as my colleague was referring to, and others, because people's livelihoods and businesses are at stake. As a former entrepreneur and business owner, I cannot imagine what that experience has been like for those whose livelihoods and dreams have been impacted. Again, that is why I support the targeted, measured, time-limited use of the Emergencies Act.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague seems to think that the Emergencies Act was essential.

I would like him to explain how the police were able to clear the Ambassador Bridge without this legislation.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Vuong: Madam Speaker, what is essential is people's livelihoods. What is essential is people's ability to afford rent, put food on the table and take care of their families. For three weeks, there were people who did not feel safe going home. For three weeks businesses were closed and disrupted. People's livelihoods are essential. That is why it is essential for the Emergencies Act to be implemented in a measured, limited, targeted way.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Madam Speaker, right off the hop, I want to acknowledge that it is Family Day here in Saskatchewan, and I hope the residents of Battlefords—Lloydminster, despite the cold weather, are able to go out and enjoy some activities, since Saskatchewan has lifted almost all of its restrictions.

We know that the invocation of the Emergencies Act is not only unprecedented but also extreme. While the Prime Minister has declared a public order emergency throughout Canada to justify this, there is no evidence that there is a public emergency to necessitate these broad, sweeping powers. I have listened closely to the comments from the Prime Minister and his government in the House and what they have told Canadians. I have yet to hear a legitimate justification for the implementation of this act.

Statutory Order

The reality is that our country is hurting right now, and it is disheartening. The current state of affairs is a direct consequence of the Prime Minister's failed leadership. At a time when we need leadership to bring Canadians together, the Prime Minister is acting like the Liberal Party leader, not the Prime Minister of Canada.

At the very onset, before the "freedom convoy" even rolled into Ottawa, the Prime Minister publicly insulted Canadians and dismissed the genuine concerns being raised, doubling down on the division that his government's rhetoric and policies have sown into this country throughout the pandemic. Whether it be hubris or stubbornness, the Prime Minister has refused to make even the smallest of efforts to demonstrate to Canadians that he has listened to, heard and understood their concerns.

As we know, this past week, the Conservatives presented the Liberal government with an extremely reasonable opportunity to do just that. The House voted on a Conservative motion that would have compelled the government to table in Parliament, by the end of the month, a plan, just a plan, to bring an end to the federal mandates and restrictions. This was a very reasonable motion and, at the very least, would have helped to bring some resolution to the growing frustration. It would have also given all Canadians some clarity, which, quite frankly, they are owed. Shamefully, we know the Liberals rejected the motion.

What has been even more troubling is that the Prime Minister and his Liberal government have refused to tell Canadians what metrics are being used to justify the continued enforcement of federal mandates and restrictions. Is it vaccination rates? Is it case counts? Is it hospital capacity? Is it simply Liberal ideology? Canadians do not know.

Provinces across the country have presented plans to lift restrictions under their jurisdictions. Countries around the world with lower vaccination rates than those of Canada have lifted their restrictions. Canadians cannot be expected to live with federal mandates and restrictions indefinitely. We know this because I have heard from my constituents and I know every single member of the House has heard from constituents.

Canadians have sacrificed so much over the past two years and they deserve answers from the Liberal government. However, instead of answers or plans, the Prime Minister has invoked the Emergencies Act. What is it for? Is it to crack down on protesters and those who have supported protests? To be clear, the rule of law is a fundamental principle in our Canadian democracy. Law enforcement agencies have a responsibility to enforce the law and we expect them to do so, but we know that they do not need the Emergencies Act to enforce the law. This extreme suspension of civil liberties is not about public safety or restoring order or upholding the rule of law.

The Emergencies Act is clear in its definition of a national emergency that would give grounds for its implementation. The act defines a national emergency as an "urgent and critical situation" that "cannot be effectively dealt with under any other law of Canada". There is no such situation.

• (0725)

Even in his own words, the Prime Minister has said that the Emergencies Act should not be the first or the second resort. The start of the clearing of illegal blockades at our borders, whether it be the Ambassador Bridge or the Coutts, Alberta, crossing, perfectly demonstrates that law enforcement agencies already have the necessary tools at their disposal to enforce the law.

That said, this really becomes about the Prime Minister granting law enforcement and financial institutions extraordinary powers to punish Canadians who support a cause that does not have his approval. Through this proclamation of a national emergency, the government has given itself the right to freeze the personal and business bank accounts and assets of Canadians. There are so many unanswered questions about this draconian measure and how the government intends to apply it. This is a very dangerous precedent. At every turn, the Prime Minister and his ministers have failed to give any straight answers. I have not seen justification for this overreach. This is not how the government should operate in a free and democratic society.

It is also evident that there is no consensus among the premiers to support the Liberal government's extreme response. We know there is a duty to consult built into this act, and we know that with the Liberal government, there is rarely, if ever, a collaborative process, let alone a transparent process.

The Prime Minister certainly does not have the support of Saskatchewan's premier. Premier Scott Moe has clearly stated that Saskatchewan does not support the Liberal government's invocation of the Emergencies Act. He has gone on to say that the Prime Minister has gone too far with the use of this act and has called on all parliamentarians to stop this abuse of power.

Premier Scott Moe has been very vocal in his opposition to the use of this act, but he is not alone. The Premiers of Alberta, Quebec, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and P.E.I. have all expressed their opposition to the Prime Minister's actions. Therefore, in addition to encroaching on civil liberties without clear justification, the implementation of the Emergencies Act is also encroaching on provincial jurisdiction without their expressed consensus, which seems to be a trend for the government. It does not seem to care about what jurisdiction it is encroaching on. Again, this debate is not to be taken lightly. This is a matter of principle with the very high stakes of safeguarding our fundamental freedoms.

It is also worth noting that it is clear the world is watching Canada at this moment. In considering the validity of the government's action, members of the House must decide whether the high threshold set out in the Emergencies Act to justify its use has been met. If the House gives the Prime Minister these unprecedented and extreme powers without the legal and moral justification to do so, Canada loses credibility on the world stage to criticize abuses of power.

I want each and every member of the House to think which side of history they want to be on. The actions of this place have long-lasting consequences. Either the threshold needed to implement the Emergencies Act has been met or it has not. Any doubt in that threshold should be enough to warrant opposition to it, because the personal cost to Canadians and to our fundamental freedoms is too high to get it wrong.

I will not be supporting this motion. I do not believe that the necessary threshold has been met to justify the use of the Emergencies Act. The government has not provided sufficient evidence that we are in a national emergency. There is no proof that law enforcement agencies need additional and far-reaching powers to enforce the law. Canadians should not face harmful financial penalties for opposing government policy.

We cannot sidestep the simple fact that this really is a crisis of failed leadership. There has been no effort made by the Prime Minister to bring a peaceful resolution to this impasse. In fact, it is quite the opposite. The Prime Minister has been purposeful in his words to divide, to stigmatize and to insult Canadians with whom he does not agree.

● (0730)

It is time to reject the Prime Minister's divisive politics and abuse of power. The Emergencies Act must be revoked and we need to—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Time is up. The hon. member will be able to continue during questions and comments.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Louis.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, does the hon. member think that the letter the Alberta government sent to the federal government seeking assistance with the blockade in Coutts could undermine the Alberta government's upcoming challenge to the Emergencies Act in court?

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Madam Speaker, in my opinion this was predictable. It is actually an example of what I said in my speech, that the Prime Minister does not listen to the premiers. If the Prime Minister had sat down, spoken to and heard what these Canadians had to say about how these restrictions are affecting their livelihoods and their opportunities to make a living, I believe we would not be in this position.

The question I have for the government is, what is next? Sure, the streets around Wellington may be clear, but what is next? There have been no conversations with any of the Canadians who have concerns about these restrictions.

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would first like to thank my colleague for her remarks, which are very relevant to me. Members will understand what I mean when I deliver my speech later.

My question is this. Considering that the Ambassador Bridge was cleared before this order was in effect, and with what just happened in the parliamentary precinct, where authorities managed to clear out protesters with the rules in place in the Criminal Code and the Highway Traffic Act, does my colleague believe that the gov-

ernment is trying to score cheap political points with this legislation, which is in force even though members have not yet officially voted on it today?

[English]

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Madam Speaker, again, this comes down to failed leadership. We know that law enforcement has the ability. We have seen this. I gave the examples of the Ambassador Bridge and also Coutts. This comes down to the Prime Minister failing to acknowledge actual concerns that Canadians have and how it has affected their families and their livelihoods for the past two years.

The fact that the Liberal government, along with the NDP, voted against the Conservative motion for the government to table a plan just shows arrogance and that the Prime Minister does not care about the concerns these Canadians have.

● (0735)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, Canada has become a very toxic petri dish of disinformation. We see online now that this is somehow some kind of a plot with the World Economic Forum. There is this crazy theory going around that the UN flew a secret plane into North Bay and they fired rubber bullets on people in Ottawa. We are hit and inundated with anti-vax disinformation, and it is also being perpetuated by Conservative MPs. In Washington, Congress is looking into whether Facebook was allowing bought accounts from foreign sources to push the convoy, particularly Russian disinformation.

Is Parliament ready to step up and look at the disinformation campaign? If Congress is investigating what happened with the convoy, why is there not anything happening here in Parliament?

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Madam Speaker, I do agree that there is lots of disinformation on any side of any issue, but I think this comes down to having communication. If leaders are not willing to communicate with their constituents, or in this case the Prime Minister with Canadians because they might think differently than him, that is a problem.

I also want to challenge the member. Is he just going to vote along with the government, or is he going to stand up on principle in our vote today on this?

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Madam Speaker, the House of Commons has been called upon many times to pronounce its judgment and to vote: to vote on legislation, to vote on amendments, to vote on estimates and to vote on motions. In the parlance of parliamentary procedure, when the House of Commons votes, it divides. When a recorded vote is requested and we are asked to stand and be counted, it is called "a recorded division". There are times in this House when votes are decided "on division" without a roll call. At Westminster, recorded divisions are conducted through "division lobbies".

Statutory Order

The House “dividing” is not new. The House has been dividing on subjects great and small since the first session of the first Parliament, on November 6, 1867. We have been dividing for nearly 155 years. This is what we do. This is what we are sent here to do, to serve on behalf of our constituents and on behalf of the people of Canada. We make decisions on behalf of the people we serve. We vote yea or we vote nay. There is no grey zone in between. There are no asterisks appended to our votes. There are few explanations as to why or how or for what reasons we came to a decision on any particular matter.

At 7:30 p.m. this evening, the division bells will ring, and the House of Commons will be called upon at 8:00 p.m. to divide on the matter of whether to confirm the government’s declaration of a public order emergency pursuant to the Emergencies Act. Forever in Hansard and in Journals, our names will be listed as having divided one way or the other on this very motion before us today.

Divisions in this House are normal. Divisions in opinions, thoughts and ideas are normal. Different views represented in this place and elsewhere are normal and are signs of a healthy democracy. What is not healthy are the divisions in our country and the divisions in our communities. In recent weeks and months, I have never seen such division in our country, such anger and frustration. We are one country, but we are a country that sadly has grown more divided.

Each of us can play a role in reducing this division, but it requires work. It requires us to refrain from throwing more fuel on the proverbial fire and to listen to one another rather than talking past each other.

Let me be clear. I will be voting against the use of the Emergencies Act. However, my vote is far more than a simple nay. It is more than a monosyllabic answer, and it requires more than a 140-character tweet of an explanation. It is possible to add some grey to a black and white explanation.

In Canada, it is possible to disagree with, to condemn and to call for the removal of illegal blockades, while also suggesting that the government use measures short of the Emergencies Act to achieve that. As Canadians, we can call for and reinforce the need to be a country of law and order, while also arguing that the tools of the Emergencies Act are an overreach. We can and we must call out and condemn those who would use anti-democratic and nonsensical MOUs that call for the overthrow of a democratic government, while at the same time listening to the concerns of individual Canadians, business owners, truck drivers and entrepreneurs who are concerned about how rules have impacted their businesses, livelihoods and families. We can and we must call for the peaceful resolution of situations, while at the same time disagreeing with efforts to debank or freeze the assets of Canadian citizens.

The question that confronts us today is whether this act and the provisions included in the order in council are appropriate at this time and in these circumstances.

• (0740)

On October 16, 1970, the House of Commons convened to debate the declaration of the War Measures Act by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau. Of the speeches given that day, none was as clear as

the clarion call of the gentleman from Prince Albert, the Right Honourable John Diefenbaker. In this House, at that time, he said, “Mr. Speaker, this is one of those occasions when Parliament has the opportunity of dealing with the question of freedom which, above everything else, is the mandate of Parliament and the reason that Parliament exists.” Today, 52 years later, Parliament is called upon once again to deal with the question of freedom.

When the government places limits on the rights, freedoms and privileges of Canadians, it is the government, and the government alone, that must justify it. It is the government that must show to Canadians that the limitations are reasonable. Indeed, the Emergencies Act itself requires it.

The Hon. Perrin Beatty served as Minister of National Defence in 1987 when he introduced Bill C-77, An Act to authorize the taking of special temporary measures to ensure safety and security during national emergencies and to amend other Acts in consequence thereof, the short title being the Emergencies Act. Mr. Beatty, I might add, was the member of Parliament for parts of Wellington County that are now within my riding of Perth—Wellington.

In an interview last week with The Wellington Advertiser, Mr. Beatty was asked whether the act was being used appropriately:

Without being privy to government intelligence, he said flatly, “I don’t have enough information.”

“All of us are inclined to give [the government] the benefit of the doubt,” he added, saying the onus falls on the government to prove its case.

Beatty did, however, point out blockades afflicting Canada’s trade routes were resolved without reliance on the Emergencies Act, which was intended to be used “when everything else had failed.”

This is a good point to emphasize. The blockades at the Ambassador Bridge and the Coutts border crossing were all resolved with police enforcement rather than relying on the Emergencies Act.

There have been arguments that law enforcement used different measures that were granted to it through the Emergencies Act, but that is not the question that faces us. The question that faces us is whether other measures were available short of the Emergencies Act.

In an interview on Sunday with CTV’s *Question Period*, no less an authority than the former commissioner of Ontario Provincial Police confirmed that he saw no need for the Emergencies Act to undertake the actions that were taken in downtown Ottawa. He said, “It was a lack of bodies, a lack of officers to do what we saw done yesterday. This could have happened [on] day two or three if they could have amassed the number of officers they had.”

In fact, section 21 of the Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act already provides for the provision of emergency police services from any province or from the federal government, so when the government says that the Emergencies Act was not the first or the second step, the question hangs in the air of why this act was not used before the sledgehammer of the Emergencies Act.

Others have suggested that this act was needed to compel tow trucks to assist in removing the trucks in downtown Ottawa, but again, there are other provisions that could have achieved this. Paragraph 129(b) of the Criminal Code gives police the option to require anyone, “without reasonable excuse, to assist a public officer or peace officer in the execution of his duty in arresting a person or in preserving the peace”.

Frankly, it would appear that the only tools employed by the government that were not previously afforded to it were the financial powers, and these are the powers that have concerned so many people. Being debanked, even for a period of 30 days, could have serious impacts on an individual, and not just for 30 days but for 30 years to come. That the government is actually considering making some of these tools permanent is even more concerning for all Canadians. When temporary powers become permanent powers, the concern for all Canadians is great.

I will conclude with the words of former prime minister John Diefenbaker: “Parliament is more than procedure; it is the custodian of the nation’s freedom.” May we all live up to that duty today.

• (0745)

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first, I would like to thank all the police forces that were involved over the weekend in executing a very diligent, professional and judicious police matter, and give special thanks to the members of the York Regional Police who came in from my area and assisted.

Invoking the Emergencies Act is a very time-limited and proportionate measure, obviously done with much consideration and, in my view, justifiable, given what went on at the border crossings and the over three-week occupation of our nation’s capital by the protesters. When I think of what has transpired, would the hon. member agree that, time-limited and proportionate, this is a useful measure, a tool that has been used in a limited manner and that is getting the job done and we are getting to a point where the capital is opening up?

Mr. John Nater: Madam Speaker, the member for Vaughan—Woodbridge talks about this being a useful tool and measure, but I go back to my rural roots. As a farm kid growing up, yes, it would be nice to have that John Deere S series combine to get the job done, but we have spent a lot of years using the old John Deere 4400 combine, and it combined a lot of corn and soy beans. It got the job done.

The fact is that, in this matter, there are a lot of tools available to the government that it simply did not employ. It went to the sledgehammer approach and used the Emergencies Act, when it could have used so many other acts and tools, short of the sledgehammer of the Emergencies Act.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Perth—Wellington for his speech.

At the beginning of his speech, he mentioned the division he is seeing in society, and I am seeing the same thing. He said that this is not something that can be explained in a tweet. I imagine he has

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the same problem the rest of us do of trying to respond to everyone on social media and explain this in a few lines. The division that was created is very complex. That is what I would like him to speak to.

Does he believe that the government’s negligence, its inaction, as my colleague mentioned, before using a sledgehammer measure like the Emergencies Act has set a precedent? The government allowed people to occupy downtown for more than 20 days. This morning, we see in the headlines that the protesters plan to come back.

I would like my colleague’s thoughts on that.

Mr. John Nater: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the question.

Indeed, the government could have done much more before resorting to the Emergencies Act. The government could have collaborated with the provinces and the police forces across Canada before using this legislation. It is incredible that the government allowed this occupation to go on and did not take any other measures before opting for the Emergencies Act.

• (0750)

[English]

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the intervention from my hon. colleague. It was balanced; it was calm; it was fair. That is something that has not necessarily happened all the time here in the last few days, so I appreciate that.

One of the things he was talking about was the government not having to use this legislation. However, it was the Ottawa interim police chief himself who said it was not until he had the abilities from the invocation from the Emergencies Act that he could actually do the job he needed to do, and that he could use all of those pieces of legislation available to him at all the different levels of government to do what he needed to do.

Could the member explain why the police chief, in that specific position, would actually say that, if it was not the case?

Mr. John Nater: Madam Speaker, I would say that, yes, different police forces have been able to use the Emergencies Act, but that does not mean that it was the only tool that was available to them. There are many measures the government and police forces could have used, short of using the Emergencies Act. I think that is the issue we are facing here today, the use of the sledgehammer of the Emergencies Act, when other tools and pieces of legislation were available. They have been more cumbersome, but when we are dealing with the rights and freedoms of Canadians, sometimes that extracumbersome process is needed.

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Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, as you know it is a common practice here in Parliament to thank one's constituents when one rises to speak for the first time after an election. There is obviously a good reason for doing that, beyond one having good manners. It acknowledges the most important truth about this place, which is that the people who live in our ridings are the reason why we are here, whether they voted for us or for someone else, and even if they did not vote at all. This is the House of Commons, and it belongs to the people.

I would like to once again thank the constituents of Cypress Hills—Grasslands for sending me here as their representative. It is a great privilege to stand here today on their behalf. I must speak for them and for their families. I will always try my best to do so.

It always takes time and effort to hear from different people, to reach out to them and figure out what they are thinking, feeling and experiencing. Sometimes we agree and sometimes we disagree and that is okay, but this task is absolutely worth it no matter what. If I disagree with constituents, that should not prevent me from honouring them with courtesy, dignity and respect as people and as fellow Canadians. In fact, it is when we are challenged with competing thoughts and ideologies that we often make the best decisions for our constituents and our country.

As a song from my youth says, “not a diamond without the pressure”. That is what it means to be a member of Parliament. Everyone has a role in the democratic process, but elected representatives have a duty to make an extra effort. A beautiful part of our parliamentary system is that the same people who serve as the Prime Minister and cabinet ministers are also just members of Parliament.

For example, the current Prime Minister was elected as a member for Papineau and the leader of the official opposition was elected as the member for Portage—Lisgar. On either side of the House they have to work in both roles at the same time. It remains true that, before assuming public office in government, someone was first elected by the people of their riding to be their voice in Ottawa. That is their primary role. As ministers, they have simply added another responsibility to serve the entire nation regardless of representation, but it should never change the fact that they are working here to represent the people of Canada to the government and not the other way around.

If they ever forget it and become disconnected, they have completely lost their way, and I do believe that recent events so far show that we are losing our way as a nation. This point should be front of mind, as we debate and vote on the government's emergency order. We have a perfect opportunity to remind the minority government that it should not be playing around with power. It should not be using the Emergencies Act to forsake their public responsibility. The Liberals need to come back down to earth.

On Friday, with police action expected to begin here in Ottawa, the scheduled debate of the House of Commons was cancelled with short notice. I decided to go for a walk and look around the scene outside of Parliament for myself to get a sense of the situation at hand. As I did, I met a man who was proudly wearing military medals on his coat, a veteran who had served our country overseas in Afghanistan. He told me that he made the long journey across Canada to be here because he is worried about the country that he

loves, the country that he served, and he wants to stand for freedom. I thanked him for his service.

I also talked to a school teacher who lives downtown, and she did not feel threatened at all as she walked near the front of the protests. She talked about how she used to be a big supporter of the Prime Minister, but can no longer support him because of his arrogance and lack of respect for other Canadians.

What I saw and heard from these individuals was far from what the Prime Minister infamously called a “small fringe minority” with “unacceptable views”. The disconnect is more obvious than ever, and it brought out some of the disturbing scenes in our nation's capital over the weekend after the Liberals invoked the Emergencies Act. The government's show of force has wounded our society and this is likely to be the longest lasting result of it.

It is an outrage to see our Prime Minister invoke hateful rhetoric against those concerned for their freedoms, calling them a “fringe minority” and choosing to label them as “racist” and “misogynistic”. Especially in difficult times, we need a Prime Minister who will put partisan politics aside for the common good. After all, the Prime Minister represents every Canadian. Every Canadian is one of his constituents.

For name-calling to be the first and only action taken by the government before using the Emergency Measures Act further shows the lack of respect he has for people who do not agree with him. There are many Canadians, vaccinated and unvaccinated alike, who recognize that Canadians should have the right to make medical decisions for themselves. After all, it is a change in the government's position on the vaccine exemption for truckers that has triggered all of this.

Canadians should not have to face the question of taking a vaccine or losing their job. They should not be sent home from stores because they have not been vaccinated. They should not have to face a financial penalty simply because they are not vaccinated. Children should not be banned from playing sports because they are not vaccinated. No Canadian should have to face such dehumanizing treatment for simply choosing not to get vaccinated.

● (0755)

That is not the Canada I grew up in, and that is not the Canada our children should grow up in either.

This past December, I rose in the House on behalf of all those who have lost their jobs and their livelihoods as a result of vaccine mandates. Following that statement, I received hundreds of emails from Canadians all across the country sharing their personal stories, many of them devastating. I heard from those who have lost their home because they no longer have a job or an income to pay the mortgage. I heard from others who have had to explain to their children that they could no longer join their friends at the hockey tournament. I heard from students who were kicked out of their university programs. More devastatingly, I have heard from parents who have lost a child to suicide and attribute the cause to lockdowns, mandates and bullying.

These people live in Liberal ridings as much as they live in mine, but does the government bother listening to them? It is not enough for the Prime Minister to simply say he heard them in an empty statement while clearing the streets.

Vaccine mandates are wrong. They are morally wrong, and it is increasingly clear that they are a public policy failure. They are ruining livelihoods, clogging supply chains, stifling our economy, eroding medical privacy and dividing society, all the while not living up to the earlier promises of defeating COVID.

Why continue to act like they are a magic bullet out of the pandemic? Why continue to trample on protesters and Canadians' rights with little to show for it? When will the government finally take responsibility for their divisive policies, walk back their vaccine mandates and actually consider a comprehensive plan to combat COVID-19, including access to therapeutics and increasing funding to provinces so they can ramp up ICU capacity.

I will also add that I believe an apology is needed, an apology for treating those who are unwilling to get vaccinated or peaceful protesters as second-class citizens. They are not second-class citizens. They are as Canadian as we are, and they are worthy of respect, dignity and a listening ear.

I also want to encourage NDP members to vote against the motion. Each time the War Measures Act was used, the previous version of the legislation, it left behind wounds in our society after enabling real or perceived abuses of power. This is already turning out the same way. I do not expect to quote Tommy Douglas all the time, but I believe his precedent is worth considering. He described former prime minister Trudeau's use of the War Measures Act in Quebec as "using a sledgehammer to crack a peanut". He stood on principle by voting against the grain at the time.

There have been some misgivings in the NDP caucus about opening Pandora's box, but they say they want to fix it somehow with an inquiry after the fact. One of their former caucus colleagues, who served as the former member for Regina—Lewvan, even used the same quote from Tommy Douglas to challenge the current NDP's stated intention to support Liberal overreach.

I hope they will listen to their own people, even if they are from my province. Over the many hours of debate that I have sat in on, I have only heard a handful of Liberals even try to outline a reason for invoking the act, and it is a stretch at best. Some have tried to use the blockades around the country as the reason. Unfortunately for the Liberals, they were all mostly cleared prior to invoking the

act. Another tried to say they needed to compel tow truck companies to move some of the semis and vehicles. Once again, they were found to be wrong, as my colleagues from Haldimand—Norfolk and from Perth—Wellington have already pointed to existing laws that provide that ability.

The last reason they gave was to stop the foreign funding of the "freedom convoy". This does not constitute a national emergency. Unfortunately for the Liberals, yet again, a couple million dollars donated to a crowdfunding campaign were halted without the use of the Emergencies Act.

We have witnessed over a billion dollars in foreign funding come into Canada over the last number of years to intimidate workers in the energy sector, lead misinformation campaigns and stop pipeline projects and resource developments, and there was not a word of concern from the federal government or the NDP for that matter.

The effects of this reached new levels this past week when axe-wielding protesters injured an officer and destroyed heavy machinery and buildings on-site in B.C. and still, not a word of concern. Is it because they support that protest, or is it because they know that, if all this foreign money were to be investigated, their friends and supporters might be implicated? If they are going to use this flimsy narrative of foreign funding, then they better be consistent in their approach to it.

If nothing else, after all that has been happening in Ottawa, I hope that we can learn the correct lessons. Let us listen better to Canadians, and let us keep the Liberal government in check.

• (0800)

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the hon. member talks about freedom. I am wondering which freedoms he is trying to preserve. Is it the freedom to overthrow the government? Is it the freedom to terrorize people in Ottawa? Is it the freedom to choke off billions of dollars in trade? Is it the freedom to flout the law after everybody was very, very clear on what the people in Ottawa, at Coutts, at the Ambassador Bridge, wanted?

Are those the freedoms he is trying to protect?

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, let us be clear. There is nobody in this House who supports the unlawful overthrow of the government. We live in a democracy, after all.

At the end of the day, the issues we are hearing about have to do with people who feel like they are not being heard by the government. They feel abandoned by the government, so they came to Ottawa to protest. We have seen protests pop up across the country. Unfortunately, we have seen blockades of critical infrastructure that have led to the loss of millions of dollars to the economy. That is definitely unfortunate.

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Thankfully, the RCMP, without the use of the emergency measures act, was able to step in to get the job done, open the borders, open the crossings back up and restore our commerce.

[Translation]

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Cypress Hills—Grasslands for his speech and ask him a question.

He talked about respect for his constituents. I think that is the foundation of the work that we do and I dare imagine that is also the foundation of the work the Prime Minister must accomplish. To me, a big part of this crisis in the national capital has to do with the Prime Minister's shortcomings.

I would like my colleague's opinion on what could have been done in a way that respects Canadians and Quebecers.

[English]

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, I really think that opening that dialogue, rather than going from zero to 100, would have been a great first step. The mayor of Ottawa, even though he clearly did not agree with the protesters and what they were doing, actually went out and tried to meet and talk to the organizers. He was able to talk to them and make some arrangements to free up some of the side streets to allow people to move around and to get some of the people to go home. The Prime Minister's job is to be a statesman, to be willing to stand and talk to people to really hear what their concerns are. That has to be the first step that happens, and then we can build from there. Then we can start looking at some of the other laws that we already have in place.

We already heard members talk about laws that would have allowed for the clearing of parked vehicles. We did not see any of the bylaw enforcement on vehicles that were in the middle of the street for longer than the bylaw allowed them to be there. There are some very simple measures that could have been taken.

Again, we need some leadership. We need to listen to Canadians.

• (0805)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member's party and the Bloc continue to talk about the Ambassador Bridge and the corridor being safe, but now the Jersey barricades have been moved to among the community. He talked about listening to constituents, but I do not understand why those parties continue to propagate the fact that things are okay.

In fact, right now we are dealing with a bomb threat to the mayor in his house, and a person has been arrested. I would like the member to respond to that. Since this has been going on, the mayor has had to take leadership down here. Since the situation has escalated so much, he has now actually received a bomb threat to his house and to his family, and a person has been arrested.

Would he speak specifically to that? That is happening right now.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, obviously nobody ever deserves to have a bomb threat to their house for simply trying to stand up and do their job. The mayor is doing what he can to best serve his constituents.

Part of the question was about things not being okay. The member is right that things are not okay. People all across this country have felt disrespected for far too long. They have felt like they have been vilified and divided on purpose, for only political gain.

Constructive dialogue needs to happen. The Prime Minister had a role to play. If the Prime Minister had done his job, I feel that the tensions would not be where they are down in Windsor West and the surrounding ridings. For things to have gotten to a point that somebody has done something so unfathomable and unthinkable as to offer up a bomb threat is ridiculous.

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Madam Speaker, I join this debate with great sadness and disappointment in my heart this morning. Please make no mistake: It is always an honour to be the voice of the residents and citizens of Chatham-Kent—Leamington in this chamber, but I am sad because of the toll that the current situation continues to have on Canadians and the fact that so much of this is unnecessary and avoidable.

The fundamental question that the government has put before us today is this: Do we believe that the public emergency act is the right tool for right now? Has the rightfully high threshold for a public order emergency been met? If the question is how we remove the protest, the blockade, the occupation that was encamped outside these doors, then should the question not be to ask what enforcement tools current legislation lacks to address the illegal activities outside this House?

Let me be clear: Illegally parking a semi, excessively blowing horns and harassment all contravene bylaws, but these violations are subject to fines, towing, injunctions and existing remedies under existing laws, provincially and municipally, and under existing law enforcement. They can be reinforced with help from federal police forces without invoking this act. After all, is that not what cleared the illegal blockades in Surrey, Windsor, Emerson and Coutts? I am very thankful for law enforcement intercepting truly dangerous elements caught with illegal guns and ammunition near Coutts. Therefore, I thank our "un-defunded" police forces.

Does a basic interpretation of the Emergencies Act determine that its threshold for invocation has been met, or are we more concerned that we are being asked to give the Prime Minister great powers, given his history of deception and his disrespect for the law?

The Prime Minister asks us to trust him, to give him unlimited authority to implement “other temporary measures authorized under section 19 of the Emergencies Act that are not yet known.” He is the only Prime Minister convicted for ethics violations, not once but twice, and he avoided a third conviction due to lack of evidence, not lack of intent. He is the only Prime Minister ever to sue, Madam Speaker, your office, to keep from this very House documents ordered released by Parliament with respect to the Winnipeg virology lab. He now asks that we trust him with power never before invoked or confirmed by this House under this act. It seems that when faced with difficult situations, the Prime Minister's go-to response is to grab as much power as he can.

Let us just think back to immediately after the declaration of the pandemic in March 2020. The Prime Minister responded by attempting to give the government unlimited, unfettered taxing and spending powers without parliamentary oversight. His instinct was not to come to this House and enter into dialogue to determine the path forward. Yes, Her Majesty's loyal opposition sits on this side of the chamber and might not have immediately agreed to every point put forward, but he was forced into dialogue and debate with us and we demonstrated through our subsequent actions that we would support emergency measures when properly engaged.

Similarly, the Prime Minister did not engage in dialogue with Canadians involved with this protest. He does not have to agree with them but he does, or he should, have to listen. This very process of listening and engaging de-escalates any situation. It is the hallmark characteristic of leadership. Name-calling, dividing, stigmatizing, traumatizing and grabbing for power escalate any situation. They are hallmark characteristics of what? Members can fill in the blank.

If the question is how the Prime Minister tries to cover up his record of governing mistakes and whether this attempt to redirect public attention will work, clearly the answer is no. Inflation will not be reduced. Our debt will not be addressed. Interest rate rises will not be blunted. Immigration backlogs will not be addressed. Labour shortages will not be alleviated. Housing prices will not drop, and budgets will not balance themselves.

If the question is how invoking this Emergencies Act fits into the government's overall plan to get us from a pandemic to an endemic situation, again, for this question, there is a very clear answer. No, it does not do that, because there continues to be no plan.

● (0810)

History will show that we got into this crisis, this situation in our nation's capital, because the government did not have a plan to transition from a pandemic to an endemic situation. The government's lack of a plan by which businesses in Chatham—Kent—Leamington or anywhere in the country could more predictably manage their staff, their business and their investment decisions continues to cause unnecessary hardship and failure. The failures are not theirs; it is the government's problem, the government's failure to plan and its lunging from problem to problem with no coherent plan that could better multiply our effectiveness through our collective capacity.

Farmers, greenhouse operators and small businesses in my riding and across Canada continue to live with the uncertainty of labour

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supply, border access and supply chains. They want to see a plan. Our health care system wants to see a plan for surge capacity. It is not the bricks and mortar that are missing; it is the human resources and the people for whom the government did not plan to resource.

The government's lack of a plan is evident in the fact that we are so late in acquiring sufficient rapid tests; we are so late in developing domestic vaccine manufacturing capacity, and we are so late in coordinating coherent, integrated, science-based messaging, from our health care leaders to our political leaders.

It has been more than two years since the pandemic came to Canada, and we still have no plan for living in an endemic state. Canadians did what was asked of them. They got vaccinated, they stayed home, they safely distanced and they agreed to forgo family gatherings, travel and basic but essential human contact, all to do their part. What has been the reward for the constituents of Chatham—Kent—Leamington, or for any Canadians, for what they did? It is more divisiveness, greater stress, more lost jobs, out of control inflation, economic uncertainty and still no plan.

Like all of us here, I have friends on both sides of the challenge before us. Something has happened in our country that may never be replaced. The capacity for kindness that Canadians are known for has been strained by our nation's leader, who has used the politics of division rather than co-operation and understanding. There is a sadness that comes when Canadians are pitted against Canadians.

There is more than enough blame to go around. Was the City of Ottawa woefully unprepared and did it make serious mistakes at the beginning of this situation, despite the many days of notice that the convoy was coming? Many people would say, “Yes.” Was the province slow to table resources? Again, many people would say, “Yes,” but here, in the centrepiece of our nation's capital, the question before us today is twofold.

The first question is, where is the plan forward? Even when the crisis outside these walls is resolved, we will simply return to this question and the need for an endemic plan to return to normalcy. The second question is the legislation before us today. Simple common sense tells us that if we take the total of what the Prime Minister expects the Emergencies Act to bring and subtract from it what is already covered under existing laws and resources, then I respectfully submit that the difference we are left with pales in comparison to the constitutional precedent we are asking the House to confirm.

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I must vote against these measures. The Emergencies Act is not a substitute for leadership, but rather a consequence of the lack of it. The Prime Minister loves telling Canadians he has our backs. He uses the approach of trying to hide behind us while pointing at those he believes are to blame. Leading cannot be done from behind. Leading means engaging in conversation, even with those with whom one disagrees. The only good thing that may come from enacting this act is that there will be an inquiry, an accountability review, which will no doubt expose and document for history that when Canada was at one of its greatest challenges, the response from the government was a grab for power through the tactics of division and the lack of any plan forward.

Let us get on with responsible endemic living. Canadians have done their job; now let us do ours.

● (0815)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, this is so typical of Conservatives. I find it interesting that the member is already willing to provide the House with the outcome of a public inquiry that will happen afterward. That underscores the Conservative gaming here. The member does not care about the public inquiry that will happen. He has already determined the outcome. He just informed the House what it would be, and that is the unfortunate reality of this.

Would the member like to actually have a public inquiry that looks into the matter and comes to its own decisions, or would he rather just tell us what the outcome is going to be right now?

Mr. Dave Epp: Madam Speaker, I am thankful that our forebearers who created this legislation incorporated the process of an inquiry into it. I am open to being wrong in my prediction about what that inquiry will state, but given the history that we, as Canadians, have experienced from the government, I will respectfully stand behind my prediction.

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Speaker, a few moments ago, I heard that there is still a lot happening at the Ambassador Bridge.

Knowing that the blockade at the Ambassador Bridge was dismantled before the act was invoked, does my colleague believe that the act, which is in force at this time, will be essential to completing the efforts, that is to continue ensuring the safety and peace of people in that area?

[English]

Mr. Dave Epp: Madam Speaker, as the member stated, the blockade and occupation at the Ambassador Bridge were cleared prior to the invocation of this act. They were cleared with the co-operation of our various police forces. I condemn the ongoing situation there, but it is able to be cleared with existing forces. It is the draconian imposition of this act, and all that it entails and all its precedents, as I mentioned in my remarks, that are of great concern to this side of the House. We support law and order. We condemn the illegal occupation and blockades, but as so many of my colleagues have pointed out, resources exist to address the issues without resorting to resources that are not required.

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, has the member heard anything from the Liberal government to date that would justify the invocation of the act in the first place? More importantly, now that these illegal blockades have been dealt with, does it still require the act to be in existence?

● (0820)

Mr. Dave Epp: Quite frankly, Madam Speaker, no. What is implied or directly addressed in that act are ongoing powers that are not required. The ones that concern us the most are the ongoing financial powers of the banks to possibly freeze accounts and things such as that. If there are crimes being committed, existing legislation empowers the government to go after those breaking the law through large donations through proper, existing sources. It is not for a \$20 donation for a T-shirt to support a cause that is symptomatic of so much unrest in this country. It is sad that we have come to this point in our country.

Mr. Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Nickel Belt.

I rise today to speak on this important motion. The decision to invoke the Emergencies Act is being taken with much consideration. This debate is crucial and necessary.

For weeks now, the unlawful occupation and illegal blockades have disrupted the lives of Canadians, harmed our economy and endangered public safety. We have witnessed intimidation in our communities and at our borders.

The Emergencies Act has been invoked to supplement federal, provincial, territorial and municipal authorities to address and resolve these issues. The impacts of these blockades are significant. Over three weeks, they caused serious harm to our economy, our livelihoods and our way of life. They threatened our democracy and marred Canada's international reputation. These measures are being implemented in part to halt the illegal actions of those whose intention is to overthrow our democratically elected government, and to stand up to those who wish to extort change by intimidation.

The measures implemented in the Emergencies Act are not broad or overreaching. They are specific and targeted. They are not permanent. They are temporary, and set for 30 days or less. They are not heavy-handed. They are proportionate. The level of proportionate response is dictated by co-operating levels of law enforcement, not the government.

These short-term measures have allowed law enforcement at all levels of the government to work in ways they could not have previously. The Emergencies Act spells out a clear process that must be followed once the act is invoked. The specific measures of the act are subject to numerous checks and safeguards, including the oversight of a parliamentary committee.

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is enshrined in this act. By invoking the act, a public review will automatically be triggered. The review ensures transparency and oversight. I have heard from some who have concerns that invoking this act will set a precedent. I am confident the criteria to invoke the act have been met.

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The precedent I will not stand for is to give in to lawless occupations and blockades by those who demand that governments negotiate with them or be undemocratically replaced.

All actions under the act will comply with our charter. That requirement is built into the legislation. Canadians expect us to act within the bounds of the charter, and we will live up to these expectations. Despite the misguided efforts of a few, our democracy remains strong. However, we cannot be lulled into a sense of complacency.

Attempted blockades have persisted. Because of the act, additional attempts have been thwarted. These are new powers we used as recently as a few days ago to prevent the resurrection of a border blockade. This problem is clearly national, and it is still a threat.

The unfortunate radical populism that fuels people to block supply chains and disrupt daily lives has not gone away. The pattern of rhetoric that can be linked to far-right extremism is well documented. We must not minimize the reality of this threat.

What has emerged is an entrenched, organized movement that is being motivated by toxic ideology. These are groups that do not believe in the legitimacy of the government. They knew where to hit Canadians: our borders, supply chains and communities. The Emergencies Act leveraged tools to end these disruptions and prevent future ones.

The act has allowed law enforcement to restrict access to Ottawa's downtown core. By creating a secure zone, authorities were able to stop an influx of more people in vehicles, preventing them from becoming entrenched in the capital.

It is important not to confuse illegal blockades and occupations with legal protest. Canadians can continue to teach their children about the democratic right to assemble peacefully and legally. It is an important part of sharing our values.

This is different. Let there be no mistake: bouncy castles, toboggans and hot chocolate do not make an illegal protest a safe place for children. This was a dangerous situation, yet parents continued to bring their kids to the front line of these unsafe scenes. This act seeks to protect children, such as those who have been used right outside these doors as human shields for the adults who were supposed to keep them out of harm's way.

The Emergencies Act prohibits parents from bringing children under the age of 18 to an illegal occupation. It does not prohibit children from attending peaceful and legal protests with their families.

Recent events here in Ottawa and at multiple border crossings demonstrated that the ordinary mechanisms in place at multiple levels of jurisdiction were not sufficient. The subsequent inquiry that is mandated will help uncover the reasons why other measures were not effective. These measures that were enacted are already working, and we are already seeing results.

We are restoring the rights and freedoms of those who have been deeply affected: the rights of citizens to safely walk the streets, the rights of workers to earn a living, the rights of businesses to stay open and serve customers, and the rights of people and goods to move freely across international borders.

● (0825)

The debate we are having now, and the review process that will follow, will allow us, in a transparent and democratic way, to strengthen the gaps that allowed this situation to happen. This will ensure that we learn and adapt so we will not have to mobilize the Emergencies Act in the future for the same reason. In that way, the Emergencies Act is a self-correcting piece of legislation.

These measures have not been enacted because of the ideology of the people protesting. That is not the case. This act was invoked to put an end to illegal blockades and unlawful occupations. The city of Ottawa is recovering. Businesses are starting to open, and people are starting to get back to their lives. I believe that crisis reveals character, and I am certain Canadians have the capacity to heal the damages done with dialogue, compassion and respect.

I want to commend the professionalism, and controlled and proportionate response, of the law enforcement officials of jurisdiction over the past few days. I also want to commend journalists and reporters for the important role they played throughout the crisis. Their work, in very difficult circumstances, has been remarkable. The violence and harassment they were exposed to is unacceptable. We need to stand together, all of us in the House, and condemn the hate speech and harassment that we are seeing. Doing or saying nothing about the attempts to intimidate journalists is the same as supporting what is being done to them. Not condemning it is condoning it. I ask my colleagues to consider that as they see members of the media being threatened by angry mobs.

I would like to address my constituents, the residents of Kitchener—Conestoga, and thank them for taking the time to reach out to me. There has been a diverse range of sentiments, and I have listened to their views very carefully. The conversations, the emails and the messages I received all weigh into this decision. I was elected to be the member of Parliament for all constituents in my riding, not just those who share my views. I understand and I take seriously my obligation to hear everyone's views and to listen. I strive to respect and value the opinions of others.

The impacts of the border blockades have been felt in our riding, as people were laid off at local plants. Toyota, one of the largest employers, was idle, which impacted many families in our community. People I spoke with at local feed mills and other businesses in Kitchener—Conestoga said they were not able to get goods across the border. I send a big thanks to the truckers and trucking companies in my riding who kept going despite those blockades.

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I understand the magnitude of this vote. The research I have done, the briefings I have attended, the debates I have been part of in the House and the conversations I have had with constituents have brought me to this moment, which is not an easy one. However, I did not become a member of Parliament to do the easy things. I became a member of Parliament to do the right things. Invoking the Emergencies Act is the right thing.

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is interesting that the member opposite was speaking about dialogue, compassion and respect being part of the process here.

Could he outline three things the current Prime Minister did that would encompass those ideas of dialogue, compassion and respect? Realistically, I think the Canadians who were out there protesting did not see any of that. All we ended up with was the ham-fisted approach of the Emergencies Act.

• (0830)

Mr. Tim Louis: Madam Speaker, being kind, compassionate and respectful is not a checklist. Rather it is who Canadians are, and we need to do that more. Mostly, it starts by listening and having those dialogues. We need to be respectful about it. If those who disagree call my office or send me an email I can handle that, but parking a truck and blocking traffic at a bridge, or taking over a city for three weeks, is not the proper way to do dialogue and is not something we are willing to accept here in Canada.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am astonished by the Liberals' comments of the past several days that this measure was reasonable, sensible and necessary.

They have repeated several times that it was not the first, second or third option. The questions we have asked about those options have gone unanswered. We have had vague replies about being aware, about this being important, about providing additional tools and other such generalizations.

I have a great deal of respect for the member from Kitchener—Conestoga and I have the privilege of working with him in committee. His efforts are generally focused on the common good and achieving results. I will humbly ask him to answer my question because we know one another somewhat and get along well, at least I hope that is the case.

Could he tell me about the three steps that preceded the invocation of the Emergencies Act?

Personally, I have not seen them and no one has talked about them.

[English]

Mr. Tim Louis: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague and friend across the aisle. I am practising my French. If I was any better, I would try to answer, but I want to make sure that I can express myself clearly.

We do work well together in the chamber, and I think the idea of invoking this act right now is to show the safeguards that are going to be in place and the dialogue that is going to happen. The debate we have had for multiple days, from early in the morning to the

middle of the night, is how we solve problems. That is how we handle a crisis. We do it together with dialogue.

We are going to have a committee. It will be formed, and that makes sense. Also, the act can be revoked earlier than 30 days if Parliament deems it necessary. I think these are proper steps. After that, we are going to have a review to find out what happened, what worked and what can be improved.

These are all steps that we need to take to make sure we can work together, but it starts with dialogue and it starts with listening.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, unfortunately, one thing that many of us can agree on is that we are here today because of the failure of many levels of government. As we all saw, when this convoy was coming in, the police opened their arms to it despite the fact that it had a clearly stated goal of overturning our democratically elected government. On the other hand, we can look at the experiences of those in indigenous nations, such as that of a woman on Wet'suwet'en territory who recently had her door knocked down with axes and chainsaws and was pulled out of her home.

Can the member speak to the differing treatment that has been given to those in the convoy versus those who are defending their land? Can we find a way to come together now that we are in this position?

Mr. Tim Louis: Madam Speaker, I respect that question; it is fantastic. We do need to look at this. We need to look at what happened. We need to look at the biases we have in our day-to-day lives, those unconscious biases that allow us to treat people differently and not with equality and equity. Hopefully as we talk about this and report on it, we will find out how we can do better in the future and make sure that all Canadians are treated properly.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Serré (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Official Languages, Lib.): Madam Speaker, thank you, *meegwetch*.

I was elected the member for Nickel Belt in 2015 and I am proud to represent my constituents for the third time and to improve the living conditions in my community.

I would never have believed I would be giving a speech in the House of Commons on the invocation of the Emergencies Act. Yet that is the case today.

[English]

I returned to Ottawa on January 31 for the House of Commons session and I have seen the events first-hand. Many lives, livelihoods and businesses in Ottawa have been impacted in a very negative way. The right to protest is fundamental. I saw and supported the right to protest with the rolling truck convoy in my riding that rolled through Highway 17 on January 28, driving toward Ottawa. However, it was different when the truck convoy parked and camped on the city streets of Ottawa. This became illegal. Also, when we see a movement propped up by hate, racism and intimidation, we have to ask ourselves what we are truly supporting. Let us be clear: Many people demonstrating were doing this peacefully. However, this became an illegal occupation and it needed to end.

I am wishing my colleagues, the residents of Ottawa and all involved parties a safe and peaceful transition as the city is getting back to the residents. This agreement should not incite violence or threats. We are more Canadian than that.

Political criticism is at an all-time high. I commend all my colleagues, federal staff and my constituency staff for remaining at the public service even through these most difficult moments. I want to thank Nickel Belt constituents with different opinions for voicing their points of view in a respectful way. There are over 91,000 voices to represent in Nickel Belt, and we may not all agree, but we most certainly all wish for a healthier, more united and stronger region.

I am grateful to be in Ottawa to represent the residents of Nickel Belt and will continue to advocate for their priorities and strive to deliver solutions. It has been a long two years. Everyone has been affected by the pandemic in some way. There is so much misinformation circling and different opinions being shared, but there is a lot that is positive. We need to reach out to people in need in each of our communities.

I will give a special thanks to my exceptional constituency office staff. Despite the vulgar and intimidating tactics and threats in the office, my team remains committing to helping. Here are a few examples. They are helping Mary, a senior, with OAS and GIS benefits; Evelyn, with affordable housing; Helen, a single mom, with the Canada child benefit; and John, with a disability pension application. There are many more.

The pandemic has not been easy for anybody. It has altered the course of normal life for almost two years. People have a right to be fed up, tired and frustrated.

• (0835)

[Translation]

The Emergencies Act is difficult. Being in government is difficult, because we are called upon to make decisions about the health and safety of Canadians. Over the past three weeks, illegal blockades have disrupted Canadians' lives and jeopardized public safety. Clearly, the local police forces have struggled to enforce the law effectively.

We invoked the Emergencies Act in order to help provincial authorities deal with the blockades and the occupation and to keep

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Canadians safe, protect jobs and restore confidence in our institutions.

Through the Emergencies Act, we are granting police officers new powers to control crowds, stop blockades and keep essential corridors open. The Emergencies Act allows the government to mobilize essential services, such as tow trucks, enables the RCMP to act more quickly to enforce local laws and strengthens our ability to stop foreign money from being used for illegal purposes.

Our government cannot allow disruptions to carry on forever. Our government will always respect Canadians' right to protest. However, this does not entitle people to occupy streets, break the law or shut down essential trade corridors.

This siege and the blockades are crippling our economy and our democracy. The specific measures set out by the act are limited, subject to many controls, and must comply with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

A parliamentary review committee will be established in the next few days to review the exercise of power during the state of emergency. These measures will be limited in time, geographically targeted, reasonable and proportionate to the threats they are meant to address.

Another important point for the people in Nickel Belt: the Emergencies Act also includes a number of significant limitations, checks and balances and guarantees. The Act also provides for a public inquiry to be held before the end of the first year.

Ottawa's interim police chief, in addition to Vernon White, the former Ottawa chief of police who was appointed to the Senate by former prime minister Stephen Harper, and Conservative Ontario Premier Doug Ford all clearly stated that adopting the emergency measures was important and essential. They also said that those measures were necessary to allow for the coordination of municipal and provincial police forces and the RCMP to keep people safe and enforce the law.

According to Michael Kempa, a criminology professor at the University of Ottawa, it is obvious that order would not have been restored without the Emergencies Act. The act is crucial because it prompted protesters to leave and outlined serious consequences.

• (0840)

[English]

To my constituents of Nickel Belt, I appreciate why the criticism comes my way. I signed up to be their MP, their voice in Ottawa, and although we may disagree sometimes, I do appreciate each of them for reaching out. I see all the correspondence that comes to my office, with lots of varied opinions on all sides. These next few weeks will be difficult and people might feel let down. We all need to listen better.

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I thank each person who has reached out to someone in need. I thank our frontline workers. I thank our law enforcement, police officers, the Greater Sudbury police officers who came to Ottawa, as many others did from across the country, the RCMP, OPP officers and local authorities for keeping Canadians safe and helping democracy move forward. The restraint these people, these men and women, have shown in the past few weeks in Ottawa has been remarkable.

I hear from my constituents that some people want mandates to continue for a little while longer because they still have concerns and want a safe, balanced approach to reopening fully. They support the government's decision. Some people do not agree with the federal government's or provincial government's position on mandates. Some support the truck convoy and denounce those who try to weaponize this movement.

All I know is that we must stick to our Canadian values and democratic process, where we value respect, denounce intimidation and choose to collaborate. MPs are the voices of Canadians, and I am as committed as ever to each of my constituents. I have kept a grassroots approach when engaging with Nickel Belt constituents, and continue to meet with individuals with varying opinions on topics while seeking to preserve the safety and health of our community. We need to grow the region. We need to do this together.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have heard many things from Liberal members throughout this debate that I disagree with. However, I want to start with one thing that I agree with, which the member said. He said that he supported the right to peaceful protest prior to blockades and he did not agree with blockading critical infrastructure. These are sentiments that I fundamentally agree with.

The provisions of the Emergencies Act that I am most concerned about are the powers given to arbitrarily freeze individual's bank accounts without a court order. We are hearing reports of individuals who have had their bank accounts frozen. These individuals donated to the convoy movement prior to any blockading, and they wanted to see peaceful protests and wanted to see the convoy movement bring its message about the need to end mandates. Now those individuals are seeing their bank accounts frozen.

I would contend that this is in violation of the charter. I would contend that giving banks the sweeping power to freeze the accounts of individual who made small donations in good faith, potentially without being in support of blockading, is totally unreasonable. I wonder if the member would agree with me that this is not an appropriate way to be proceeding.

• (0845)

Mr. Marc Serré: Madam Speaker, obviously, these emergency powers are important to keep law and order. Let us be clear. We have had the support of the Canadian chiefs of police, the interim chief of the Ottawa police and also Premier Ford, the Conservative Premier of Ontario. They are indicating that these measures are important to restore law and order in the community. As we move forward, we will need to evaluate. It was clearly identified that this was an illegal occupation and that people needed to leave. People did not leave and there are consequences for their actions. We will continue to monitor the situation as we go forward.

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for some of the things he said, especially his appreciation of the work done by the police. I fully agree with him: they did fantastic work.

I would like to ask a question about the authorities and the police. I heard him say that public safety, jobs and businesses were very important to him.

We know that the siege lasted for over three weeks. Is my colleague telling us that the government could not deploy the 1,800 RCMP officers that the City of Ottawa was asking for in order to take action?

Does the emergency measure that made it so what happened a few days ago—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Marc Serré: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her questions.

Yes, the measures were necessary. We heard from Ottawa's interim chief of police, the Premier of Ontario and many stakeholders. All have told us that those exceptional measures were needed to compel the people and trucks occupying downtown Ottawa to leave.

Clearly, these measures were necessary. These past few days, we saw the RCMP, the Ontario Provincial Police and police forces from across the country come here. The Emergencies Act clearly restored peace in Ottawa's streets.

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We have time for a brief question.

The hon. member for Windsor West.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, the situation at the Ambassador Bridge continues to be misrepresented here. The Ambassador Bridge is owned by a private American billionaire, one of the richest in the United States. Ironically, the barricades have now been moved off the Huron Church Road to there and are along the corridor. The Bloc misrepresenting this is puzzling because there is over 300 years of francophonie culture in that area settled by Jesuit over 320 years ago. The Conservatives are now supporting a private American billionaire who now has concrete barriers blocking off the businesses, employees and public along this corridor. It is literally a runway to the 401 right now.

Will the member support compensation for border communities, similar to what Ottawa has received, for all the businesses and the activity that continues to exist to this day? Ottawa is cleared up but this area is not. I cannot understand why we are preoccupied with protecting a private American billionaire who has sued the government dozens and dozens of times—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I did ask for a brief question and we are out of time.

I will ask the hon. parliamentary secretary to respond quickly.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Serré: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech and for his hard work in the Windsor area over the past several years.

He is absolutely right. Windsor area residents and businesses need support. We will follow up.

● (0850)

[English]

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Tobique—Mactaquac.

Canadians across the country are gravely concerned. The Prime Minister is invoking the Emergencies Act for a crisis that he created. He is attempting to use a tool at the government's disposal that was created with the intention of rarely if ever being used. The Prime Minister is using this last resort tool to clean up a crisis of his own creation.

The Emergency Measures Act gives extraordinary powers to government, powers that should only be used when every other effort has been exhausted. Enacting these measures should not be the first or the second thing the Liberal government does to resolve a crisis. We have not seen any action by the Prime Minister to avoid jumping to this extreme measure.

As a former police chief, I have had enough thorough experience in dealing with crisis situations and the de-escalation of such crises. The first step in de-escalation is not to bring in a sledgehammer. The Prime Minister could not even take the first step everyone should use in de-escalation. That step would be listening. The Prime Minister refused to meet with the protesters to listen to their concerns. These are his fellow Canadian citizens, whether he agrees with their opinions or not. He is the Prime Minister of Canada and a good leader listens to his fellow countrymen.

The Emergencies Act specifically states part of the criteria for enactment is that all other measures have been exhausted in attempting to resolve the crisis. How can we possibly vote in favour of this act when the Prime Minister has not even attempted to use the most basic measure of resolving any crisis. Instead, the Prime Minister has inflamed the situation, almost as if he wanted to get to this point. It is quite evident the Prime Minister is not capable of first steps in any crisis he faces. It is in his ideological identity to squash anyone who does not agree with him and unfortunately Canadians from all walks of life know this all too well.

Earlier this week my Conservative colleagues proposed a possible step to end the crisis. We proposed the government provide

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Canadians with its plan for ending the various federal COVID-19-related mandates and restrictions. This is an example of one of the many actions that was available to the government before deciding on this drastic measure. Providing Canadians with an end plan is not a controversial decision. Many of the provincial governments have already done the same. Many Canadians including many participating in the various protests would have welcomed this action as a sign the government is hearing the wishes of Canadians or some direction or evidence of an end plan. Instead, the government jumped to ignore this measured action and is all too eager to get to this extreme point that we see ourselves in today.

While the Prime Minister has failed to present enough evidence to support the use of the act, I can think of numerous examples when this country has faced a crisis and managed to come out of it without implementing the act. Just last week we saw these protests at several Canadian-U.S. border crossings. These protests created grave economic consequences for the country, including my riding of Oxford. As Oxford has strong ties to the automotive manufacturing section, I had a first-hand account of the consequences of the protest in Windsor. Many automotive manufacturing plants had to slow down or completely shut off production.

My office received numerous messages from constituents who were being laid off due to these shutdowns. The Windsor border blockade was a crisis for many of my constituents. What did not cross my mind or theirs was that the Emergencies Act would need to be invoked to solve the crisis, and in fact it was not. We saw officers peacefully remove the blockades to allow the border to reopen. They did this without the use of the Emergencies Act.

A similar situation occurred in Coutts, Alberta. Again, RCMP officers were able to clear the blockade without any tools from the Emergencies Act. There have been numerous examples throughout Canadian history when a crisis such as this one, or I may say worse than this one, have arose, many of them being of a much more dangerous nature than the current situation.

Another that comes to mind is the crisis we all saw with 2010 G20 riots in Toronto. Some members of the government would be very familiar with this crisis, the Minister of Emergency Preparedness especially as he was the Toronto police chief at the time. Maybe some forget what we saw during that crisis. We saw a bank just down the street from parliament being firebombed. We saw police cars in flames in downtown Toronto. We saw hundreds of businesses damaged by protesters. The Emergencies Act was available to our government at the time. It was not used in that crisis. Why? It did not meet the criteria outlined in the Emergencies Act.

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● (0855)

Flaming vehicles and destroyed businesses are what the Minister of Emergency Preparedness, the acting Toronto police chief, was facing at the time. If flaming banks and police cars do not constitute a reason for using the Emergencies Act, I find it very hard to see how road hockey games and bouncy castles do. The Minister of Emergency Preparedness knows very well that the police officers we have here have all the tools necessary to defuse this situation if needed. The Emergencies Act was not needed in Windsor and Coutts, Alberta.

Instead, the Minister of Emergency Preparedness said he was proud to invoke this act. I find it extremely disappointing to hear this coming from a fellow former police chief. No one in this House should be proud to use this act. However, it seems the Prime Minister is all too eager to use it.

Another similar crisis, again during the Minister of Emergency Preparedness's time as police chief, occurred a year before the G20 summit. In 2009, we saw many Tamil Canadians upset with what they were seeing happening in the Sri Lankan civil war. Canadians shut down northbound and southbound lanes of University Avenue in Toronto for four days. They blocked the U.S. consulate in Toronto and illegally blocked traffic on the Gardiner Expressway. Again, it was not necessary to invoke the Emergencies Act. In fact, use of force by police officers was not necessary. The Toronto police chief, the current Minister of Emergency Preparedness, used his training in community policing to help facilitate a peaceful end to the crisis. The police chief even received an award from the Tamil Canadian community for his leadership during the protests.

Again, I fail to see why the government sees it necessary to invoke the Emergencies Act now when it was not necessary in 2010 or even last week. Why were we able to see those crises resolved without such extreme measures? We have several precedents for why this Emergencies Act should not be invoked and we have no reasons for why it should be, yet here we are in this debate.

Let us talk about a time when the government had to react to a similar crisis. It was during the October crisis in 1970. While the War Measures Act was a different act, it did possess many similarities to the one being used today. It is important to compare the crisis of that time to what we are seeing now. In the lead-up to the October crisis, we saw a terrorist organization robbing and bombing several institutions in Quebec. That crisis reached a climax with several kidnappings and the eventual horrendous murder of Quebec cabinet minister Pierre Laporte.

That was the context of the last time a Canadian government used such drastic actions to restore order. It does not take much effort to realize that while we may be experiencing a crisis of our own, it pales in comparison to what the government of the day faced the last time an emergency act was implemented.

Invoking the Emergencies Act now, for the purpose of trying to cover up the mismanagement and poor leadership of the Liberal government, would be creating a dangerous precedent for any future crisis the government may face. What is to stop the government from implementing this act every time it has a group of fellow Canadians who disagrees. We have heard members of the government tell us that this Emergencies Act is necessary to dismantle

these illegal protests and blockades. I again ask how it was possible that the illegal protests and blockades in Windsor and Coutts were dismantled if they did not possess the required tools.

Furthermore, the act states that the nature of the emergency is one that seriously endangers the lives of Canadians. If we are in such grave danger from these protesters such as those in Ottawa, why would members of the House even have been allowed to convene in the House? The threshold for this act has not been met.

We have heard the Minister of Justice brag about how the mere mention of using the Emergencies Act resulted in protesters in Coutts, Alberta, dispersing from their blockade. The minister was bragging about using the most powerful tool available to the government. He should be ashamed that it has come to this point. He should be ashamed because it means the government has failed miserably.

All Canadians should be ashamed that the Prime Minister has failed them.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member represents my son-in-law's riding and I know he works well on behalf of his community.

In this case where we have invoked the Emergencies Act, it is so that police have additional tools as needed, tools such as stopping parents from using their children as human shields in the protest. By having the act in place, the Children's Aid Society could be used to protect children who are vulnerable in dangerous situations. The act is there for police forces to use as needed and police forces showed incredible restraint throughout the occupation of Ottawa. Now we see blockades at the borders in British Columbia.

The act is to be used where needed and as needed for the period of time they are needed. Could the member comment on the judicious use of the act in giving tools to police forces to use as needed?

● (0900)

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Madam Speaker, I am glad that the member's son-in-law found a great place to live with a good member of Parliament.

Having said that, I am concerned that the Liberals are using this act as a sledgehammer. I have worked with police officers across this country. I know that in Windsor, for instance, they were able to clear that blockade with the help of the RCMP and the OPP, and they existed before this act came in.

In Alberta and across the country we are seeing that Canadians are thoroughly upset with the Prime Minister. He does not listen and just does not pay attention.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to hear the member for Oxford on the fact that the Liberal members are suggesting that the Emergencies Act's usefulness for coordinating police forces is enough to warrant its use. However, the test is much more important and imposing: It is the necessity and essential nature of the act.

Will this legislation be used every time that it is useful for coordinating police forces?

[English]

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Madam Speaker, it would take a lot longer than the time I have to tell him what I think about it. That being said, for years and years police departments and police officers have worked in a coordinated fashion in a whole variety of things. This was all brought about through poor planning by a variety of agencies, which I am sure we will hear about as this debate goes on, but more importantly, this act did not need to be invoked. All of the things that people are taking credit for could have been done with the civil law that we already have.

As for seizing bank accounts, I have already heard from people who gave minimal amounts of money to what they believed were legal entities, and they have now had their bank accounts seized. That just does not seem right in Canada.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Qujannamiik, uqaqtittiji.*

I would like to ask the member if he has reviewed the emergency measures regulations, paragraphs 1(a) to 1(f), if he has looked at the places that are to be protected and if he has not seen the dangers that have been placed in those places.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Madam Speaker, I have not read that part of the act or I could not repeat it back, but there are so many things in the act that are dangerous to law-abiding Canadians who have now run afoul of the law.

When I heard the parliamentary secretary from Sudbury say that he supported them when they were in his community and before it became an unlawful situation, I could only hope that he did not have his bank account seized too.

Mr. Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today in this, the people's House, with both heaviness of heart and hope for the future.

My heart is heavy with all that I am hearing from people from my riding and Canadians from coast to coast. I, along with so many of them, am greatly concerned with the gargantuan overreach the Prime Minister has made with the invoking of the Emergencies Act, granting him and the government unprecedented and unnecessary powers with which to deal with the challenge that is before us.

Seven out of 10 provinces have expressed huge concerns regarding its implementation and the dangerous precedent it sets in the suppression of individual rights and freedoms of Canadian citizens.

The fact is that the blockades in Alberta, in Manitoba and here in Ontario at the Windsor bridge were all resolved peacefully by utilizing existing laws. Authorities never needed to implement or utilize the extreme measures of the Emergencies Act, which was

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known previously as the War Measures Act, which was only utilized on three previous occasions: World War I, World War II and the FLQ situation.

The weaponization of this extreme measure against political opponents, even to the extent of freezing their assets and threatening their livelihoods, is draconian, authoritarian and deeply concerning. It is just plain wrong. I will be voting to revoke it and I encourage all my fellow parliamentarians to do the same.

While reflecting in preparation for these remarks today, I was reminded of a leadership conference that I had the privilege of attending around 20 years ago, at which the keynote speaker shared a story that deeply impacted my life and influenced even my role currently as a member of Parliament.

I will never forget what the keynote speaker shared with us that evening. He was sharing a story about a king and his messenger, his apprentice. The king wanted to get a very important message through to a certain community, to an area and region in his kingdom. He wanted the community to hear it clearly and he wanted them to understand it, as the message had severe ramifications.

The messenger was hesitant and in fact was resistant and did not want to participate or go to share that message. However, the king said explicitly to the messenger, "I want you to go. I want you to visit that community for seven days, sit among the people, hear their stories and observe their customs. For seven days, do not open your mouth. After seven days, you can give the community the message that they need to hear."

The keynote speaker applied that principle to all of us as leaders or aspiring leaders. It was that before we as leaders rush in with fast answers and quick solutions and grab the megaphone to speak, we must first take the time to listen and sit where those people that we are communicating with sit and hear their stories and hear their perspectives. Whether we agree with them or not, whether we embrace all aspects of what they may be doing or not, we need to have the courtesy and the decency to at least hear what they are saying.

He said that once the messenger had done this for seven days, he communicated what he was supposed to communicate and the situation was resolved. The message was received, but the messenger did it from a place of identification. The messenger did it after having sat where they sat and hearing their stories and understanding where they were coming from, even though he did not agree with or even share many of the beliefs of those with whom he was communicating.

● (0905)

Could it be that there is an application for all of us in this House today and for the Prime Minister himself? How different things could have been had he taken the time to elicit, engage and hear what people were saying from coast to coast to coast. Rather than engage, he chose to enrage and escalate rather than de-escalate. How much of the situation could have potentially been resolved had he taken the time to hear the concerns of Canadian citizens?

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The last two years of dealing with COVID have not been easy. COVID has brought many frustrations with it from coast to coast. Canadians are weary and tired. It has been exhausting. Rather than escalation, they were looking for their leaders to bring a sense of peace and calming reassurance, but now we find ourselves in a heightened state of tension. When jurisdictions around the world are de-escalating, loosening up restrictions, lifting mandates and allowing people get their lives back and move on, the Prime Minister has chosen to use accusations, hurl insults, name-call, castigate and ridicule. Would not a different approach serve all of us well?

Canadians are looking to us and wondering, “Are you, as elected officials, hearing what we are saying? Are you hearing what we have been telling you?”

In preparation for this role as a member of Parliament, and I know many members have done the same, I knocked on thousands of doors, sat at tables, took phone calls and responded to emails. We took the time to hear the concerns of those we desire to represent, whether it was at the kitchen table of a nurse who was exhausted from long overtime hours and time away from her family or in a farmer's field with farmers who kept doing what they knew to do even through this time of crisis. When the rest of the world shut down, they kept growing and producing.

Perhaps members sat at the tables of seniors who felt lonely and isolated and had not been able to see their grandkids in a long time. Perhaps members heard the stories of people who lost their employment or whose business went under because of the prolonged restrictions and rolling lockdowns. Perhaps they heard the stories and concerns of the mill owners who were wondering if they could keep operating in these circumstances. Perhaps they heard the concerns of parents who were concerned about the increased levels of depression and anxiety their children were facing. Perhaps they heard the same concerns I have heard.

Canadians want their lives back. They want their country back. They want the Canada that we all love and cherish back. They do not recognize the Canada they are seeing displayed before them on their television right now. They are not comfortable with the anger from all sides. Canadians are looking for leaders who will listen to their cries. They are tired of the extremes on all sides. They are tired of the “us versus them”. They are tired of the Facebook wars and the social media conflicts. They are tired of family member being pitted against family member and Canadian against Canadian. They are exhausted by the continual polarization. Canadians are speaking loudly and clearly.

I conclude with this. I have reason for hope today, because we have heard their voices. I cling to this old promise from an ancient scripture: “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.”

I wish COVID-19 had not lasted two years. I wish it had been only 12 hours, but as sure as night has come and we sense the heaviness upon all of us, morning will break in this country and people will once again be able to embrace a government that hears their concerns and responds to them and chooses not to use the nuclear option of suppressing their rights and freedoms at a time when it is not needed. They are looking for de-escalation.

On this side of the House, we hear you. On this side of the House, we will bring your concerns forward.

• (0910)

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Madam Speaker, a year ago we saw Alberta lift its restrictions for the best summer ever, and it was not. Albertans suffered. The hospitals were overrun, and Albertans died who did not need to die, but this is the same message we are hearing from the protesters, at least some of them, the ones who are not trying to overthrow the government.

Does the hon. member believe that it would be best to not have only politicians making the decisions to lift mandates, but politicians backstopped with good, wise, sage public health advice?

• (0915)

Mr. Richard Bragdon: Madam Speaker, the science is very clear, and the science is recommending that mandates begin to be lifted and that restrictions begin to be lifted. There was a recent study by John Hopkins University that has been peer reviewed. It said very clearly that the lockdowns have done more harm than good, especially when we compare it to the socio-economic impacts these lockdowns are having, the mental health costs, the strain, and increased rates of anxiety and depression.

The science is clear. In jurisdictions such as the U.K., Ireland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, France and Spain, as well as 39 of 50 U.S. states, they are all moving in this direction. They are all telling us it is time to learn how to live with this and move on. That is what we should be doing and what any responsible government should be doing.

[Translation]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I understand him. We are well aware of everything that has happened over the past three weeks in Ottawa and of all of the impacts that it has had on residents and businesses, and even everywhere else in Canada and Quebec.

My colleague spoke about the protests. It is true that while people do have the right to protest, there are certain limits. It must not go as far as extremism.

Why does my colleague oppose the use of the Emergencies Act by the government, given its slow response and inaction over the past three weeks?

Mr. Richard Bragdon: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her very important question.

[English]

Yes, there are extreme elements on all sides, and I believe Canadians want us to make sure they are dealt with appropriately, and dealt with through utilizing the existing laws already in place. We saw this happen across the country. They have been utilized, and they have been effective, without using the nuclear option of going to this extreme measure.

Now, this act is being weaponized against Canadian citizens who happen to not share the same political views as the government. That is a dangerous precedent. I think what we need is a measured, reasonable response, so the hallmark of any democracy's right to protest is protected when done lawfully and peacefully, as all Canadians desire.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, Congress has launched an investigation into Facebook and how bot farm accounts in Romania, Vietnam and Bangladesh were tied to the “freedom convoy”. One stolen account accounted for millions of dollars raised and 340,000 members signed up in two days.

I am asking why Parliament has not agreed to look into Russian disinformation in the driving of the convoy, when Congress has stepped up with a serious investigation into how bot farms and extremist content were driven from outside of Canada against Canadians.

Mr. Richard Bragdon: Madam Speaker, I think right now we obviously have the tools and mechanisms to make sure safeguards are in place for foreign donors and others who are involving themselves in Canadian affairs, such as mechanisms like FINTRAC.

Let us utilize the tools that are already in place, rather than this nuclear overreach that is taking and targeting Canadian citizens for actions that may be politically opposed to the government of the day. This is a dangerous overreach, and this measure must be revoked by Parliament.

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by saying that I will be splitting my time with my esteemed colleague from Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou.

On this day of debate on the Emergencies Act, I would first like to offer my thanks to all the staff in the House, namely the clerks, the interpreters, the pages, the security officers and the cooks, among others. I also thank the reporters and their teams, who covered the various protests.

Of course, I am well aware that we are going through an exceptional situation right now. I hope that all parliamentarians, especially the government members, are well aware of this. The vote that will take place in a few hours might create an important precedent.

We have been incredibly busy these past few days. We have been busy debating an unnecessary law to lift the siege in Ottawa, and I have been busy talking to the people of Laurentides—Labelle about the issues related to this bill. Hundreds of people contacted me to talk about their concerns and what they wanted done about the blockade that, unfortunately, lasted 23 days.

I would like to use my time to explain the reasons why we oppose the use of the Emergencies Act, which the government invoked in haste without proving that other legislative tools at its disposal did not work.

I absolutely understand that people are sick to death of the virus and the public health measures and rules that changed our lives. The situation had a direct impact on me too, just as it impacted

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caregivers, business people, parents and health care workers, among many others.

It is no secret that we will vote against the use of the Emergencies Act, and there are many reasons why.

On February 15, the elected members of Quebec's National Assembly unanimously adopted a motion stating that no emergency situation justified the use of special legislative measures in Quebec and calling on the Canadian government not to apply the Emergencies Act in Quebec. Will the government respect the will of the 125 members of the National Assembly?

Even more appalling is that seven out of 10 provinces are against using this legislation. Obviously, Ontario requested it because that is where the siege was held.

The application of such legislation should not be taken lightly. It must be measured and proportionate. The Prime Minister himself said several times that the act would not be used where it is not needed. Why, then, does it apply everywhere?

The Prime Minister also explained to the House and in documents attached to the motion that he feared that other blockades would go up elsewhere in Canada, given the mobilization facilitated by social media. This type of legislation is not to be applied “just in case”; it is to be applied to deal with a real and imminent situation. The application of the act must be essential and necessary.

Every action taken in the past few days could have been taken with the tools provided under the Criminal Code. Arrests were made in coordination with the various police forces, which, in my opinion, should have been done in the early days.

What we needed was a head of state to coordinate interventions. Sadly, since being elected, I have seen no such head of state. Instead of getting out in front of a crisis, an issue, or a pandemic, the Prime Minister racks up conflicts of interest, as I saw when I was a member of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics. When the City of Ottawa called for reinforcements, the federal government dawdled. Here is how I would sum up the situation. The federal government did not try anything. Then, not knowing what to do, it invoked the Emergencies Act, once all the occupations had been cleared out. The authorities will continue their work.

The government was not too worried about the Ambassador Bridge situation until it got a call from the White House. That is kind of a big deal. Then the government did nothing until it got a call from the Ottawa police, which wanted an additional 1,800 officers. The feds sent in a handful of officers, basically just enough to protect ministers and MPs. Only about 20 officers were deployed to the protest sites.

It is important to note that the government cannot invoke the Emergencies Act unless it can demonstrate that a dangerous and urgent situation exists and cannot be handled by means of ordinary laws.

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• (0920)

There is indeed a dangerous and urgent situation, but it is limited to Ontario. We wanted the act to apply only where the occupation was taking place, especially since invoking this act, if applied more broadly than it should be, will set a dangerous precedent. The Emergencies Act was not needed to settle the rail blockades of 2020, the Oka crisis, 9/11, or even the COVID-19 pandemic.

When someone is criticized for not taking action, they try to make people forget about their bungling by using a sledgehammer as a show of strength to impress people. However, politics is not a game where players come up with strategies for the simple and only reason of maintaining or regaining power.

If this makes people rather cynical, I would tell them “welcome to the club”. Applying the Emergencies Act when the situation is confined to one location, not across Canada, is overkill. What saddens me is that the voters will think that the Prime Minister saved Ottawa. I want to express my sincerest appreciation to police officers at all levels for the tremendous work they have done.

To all those who reached out to me regarding the use of the Emergencies Act, I want to say that the siege did indeed have to be stopped. Existing measures are what saved Ottawa. The Criminal Code and traffic regulations are what saved Ottawa. No, I will not vote in favour of the use of the Emergencies Act. Quebec's 125 MNAs do not want it to be used. The implications of this legislation are too great to use it as a way to take back control, just because a government failed to take action and lacks leadership.

I would like to remind members that the federal government lagged behind the provinces when it came to implementing measures to deal with the pandemic. One need only think of the management of the borders, or lack thereof, at the beginning of the pandemic. That was a good opportunity for the Prime Minister to show some leadership as a government leader, but he did not. That is unfortunate for him and for us.

• (0925)

[English]

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will one day speak French well enough to ask the member my question in French.

I am curious if my colleague thinks the Emergencies Act should be revoked, now that Wellington Street is clear, and there is nothing further blocking the street?

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Madam Speaker, I look forward to talking to my colleague in French.

To answer her question, the point has just been proven. Removing the Ambassador Bridge blockade was possible because law enforcement took the bull by the horns and agreed on a strategy that could have been used in the early days of the blockade. Law enforcement coordinated their efforts and dismantled the blockade.

Was it because the Emergencies Act was invoked? The answer is no.

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, according to some constitutional experts, it is not enough for the Emergencies Act to be useful for the government to proclaim its application. It must be demonstrated that it is necessary and indispensable.

Would my colleague agree that this will be difficult if not impossible to demonstrate, given that the conflict has been allowed to worsen for three weeks, and that not all the legal tools available have been deployed?

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Montcalm for his very relevant question.

Indeed, we are waiting for the government to demonstrate that.

When a motion is moved to invoke the Emergencies Act, there must be an emergency, a danger to the public or a public health problem. Canada or its public health must be facing some sort of danger.

As I demonstrated in my speech, there have been so many other events with more serious repercussions on our society. How is it that after all this time, after three weeks with very little action, we decide to get out the hammer and go all out?

No, there is no need to invoke this act.

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I find the position of the Bloc Québécois to be quite interesting. Here is a party that I know is only voting against this because of the implications that it will have politically for its members, from the perspective of the national government coming in and superseding provincial territories. Despite the fact that the Bloc members are shaking their heads, I know they have a big problem with that.

However, the Bloc Québécois did not seem to have a problem with it when the Quebec government asked the federal military to come in and help with long-term care at the beginning of the pandemic.

Why was it okay for the federal government to be an active partner with Quebec to help secure and fix the long-term care problem, but when it comes to something like this the Bloc Québécois is totally against it?

• (0930)

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

I think we need to put these issues into perspective. People also need to understand the role of the Bloc Québécois.

The Bloc has always maintained that the interests of Quebec are what matter most to the party. We support what is good for Quebec.

Did the Quebec National Assembly vote unanimously in favour of this law? The answer is no. It did not do so because the problem is limited to what is happening in Canada's capital.

It is crucial that the federal government listen to the voices of our elected officials and those of seven other provinces. What happened in long-term care homes in Quebec is completely different. I am sick of people conflating different issues.

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind members that if they want to have side conversations, they should please take them out in the lobby. Whether someone is physically in the House or virtually, they still deserve the respect of the House.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou.

[Translation]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Laurentides—Labelle for her fine speech.

I want to start mine by commending the excellent work done by the police forces, whose professionalism and interventions are above reproach. I would be remiss if I did not also acknowledge the work of the security officers on Parliament Hill, who ensured our protection during the siege in front of Parliament. Thanks to them, we can safely come here and do our work every day.

We must also acknowledge the exceptional work of all the staff on Parliament Hill and the journalists covering the day's events under difficult conditions. Honestly, I would rather rise to speak to more important and less pointless topics than the one before us today.

Need I remind the House that we are in the middle of a pandemic? Need I remind the House that many first nations communities still do not have access to drinking water, that seniors are unable to make ends meet every month and that they have to choose between buying food or paying for prescription drugs? Need I remind the House that it is imperative for the federal government to increase health transfers with no strings attached up to 35% of the cost of health care as unanimously demanded by Quebec and the provinces? I could go on. The list is long.

In order to invoke the Emergencies Act, the government must demonstrate two things: That a dangerous and urgent situation exists, and that this situation cannot be dealt with under what we call ordinary laws.

All the blockades we saw across Canada these past few weeks have been taken down, one by one—and without using the Emergencies Act. Did we need the act to clear the blockades in Sarnia, in Emerson, Manitoba or at the Ambassador Bridge in Windsor? Did we need it to end the protests at the Peace Bridge in Fort Erie or in the greater Vancouver area? In each case, the answer is no. Were police forces able to end the siege here in Ottawa without the Emergencies Act? The answer is yes.

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The government should never have moved this motion. It is not warranted given the current state of affairs and the good work done by police. At best, the government should have revoked it when it saw that the blockades had been dismantled without anyone using this law. This would have given us time and allowed us to debate far more serious matters such as those I mentioned at the beginning of my speech.

As we know, several provinces, including Quebec, did not want this law to apply to their territory. The three opposition parties in the National Assembly stood with Premier Legault and expressed their disapproval of the application of the federal Emergencies Act to Quebec. Members of all parties in the National Assembly supported a motion to that effect.

Fifty years ago, the federal government used its extraordinary powers, and we know what happened, because it went down in history. The use of such legislation should not be taken lightly. Its application must be measured, proportional and justified. Why did the Prime Minister decide to apply it to the entire country? He has not been listening, because several provinces, including Quebec, do not want it. He showed no respect for the provinces and territories and did not make an informed and justifiable decision, as a true leader would have.

I will now explain why we are debating this motion. We have a Prime Minister who, instead of acting as a government leader worthy of that title, was hiding who knows where, doing nothing but waiting. It was not as though we did not know this would happen. It was not a surprise. We knew that the protesters were coming to Ottawa.

● (0935)

Let me be clear, Madam Speaker: People have the right to protest, because that is part of democracy, but they have to do it while respecting the law. Instead of being proactive, the Prime Minister chose to sit idly by. Oh, I forgot: At one point, he had the brilliant idea of pouring more gas on the fire by insulting the protesters. That is unacceptable behaviour unworthy of a real leader. Because of his inaction, the people of Ottawa and the surrounding area went through many days of hell, fearing for their safety and putting up with the noise and the traffic. Horns were blaring day and night. I sympathize with the people who had to endure that for much too long.

As well, let us not forget about the people who could not work during the siege. Businesses had to stay closed. People stayed home out of fear. Sacrifices were made. Will the government help the workers and business owners who lost revenue through no fault of their own?

Given the enormity of the situation, and having lost control and not knowing what else to do, the Prime Minister thought it might be a good idea to use a bazooka to kill a fly by invoking the Emergencies Act. That is a dangerous move. The use of this act is not appropriate here, and it will set a precedent.

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I have been watching my Liberal colleagues pussyfooting around for days. They are trying to justify the Prime Minister's decision by giving us arguments that have done absolutely nothing to convince me so far. I am still going to vote against the motion. Even the NDP said this weekend that it was no longer sure whether the Emergencies Act was required. It might change its mind and vote against the Liberals. For the past three weeks, we have experienced highs and lows and protests that should never have gone on this long.

In closing, I would like to take the rest of my time to thank all the health care workers for their efforts, dedication and courage during this pandemic. Our hearts are with them, and we are grateful for all that they do. I also want to thank the incredible organizations in Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, which have been doing an amazing job during the pandemic, as always.

Finally, I want to thank my constituents for the sacrifices they have made, for their understanding and for following the health guidelines. It made all the difference in our riding during the pandemic. Thanks to their efforts, we were able to limit the loss of loved ones during the five waves of the pandemic.

• (0940)

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

Would my colleague like to comment on the Prime Minister's lack of leadership at this time? Does she want to end the application of the Emergencies Act?

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

We know everything that happened should have happened during the early days of the protests in Ottawa. We feel the government did not take action and did not work with City of Ottawa police services. We do not think the Emergencies Act was necessary because existing municipal and provincial laws could have adequately addressed the situation. As we saw in Quebec, our own legislation was plenty good enough. That is why I do not think this act was necessary.

[English]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have been raising the issue of the Ambassador Bridge. The blockade there required extensive supports, and city of Windsor residents are on the hook for those right now.

Currently, the blockade has been moved to cut off city streets, including a 300-year-old Francophonie community that has been very important for this area. It is also impoverished. Lastly, the Ambassador Bridge is owned by a private American billionaire, who now gets the benefit of the barricades funnelling all the traffic to his coffers.

I would like the hon. member to understand and reflect on this. Who should be paying for this? Is it the city of Windsor's residents and the Francophonie culture here, or should it be the provincial and federal governments? Right now we are on the hook.

[Translation]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Madam Speaker, we know the act was invoked on Monday to no effect.

In the case of the Ambassador Bridge, city police got it open again. That can be done again, so there is no need to use the act to achieve this outcome.

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am very concerned about the phenomenon of discrimination on the basis of political views that we increasingly hear from the government. The justice minister is talking about people's bank accounts being frozen on the basis of being part of an allegedly pro-Trump movement.

In this country, as long as one is not involved in violence, one is able to hold whatever views one wants, and that should not be a factor when deciding whether individuals' bank accounts should be frozen. Many individuals donated to the convoy movement prior to the start of any blockading.

Could the member share her thoughts on this phenomenon of discrimination on the basis of political views, on how people and protests are treated differently depending on the cause they are advocating, and what we as parliamentarians can do to address this problem?

[Translation]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

As I said earlier, the provinces and local police can handle protests that get out of hand and people who break the law.

I think it is important to note that there are already procedures in place for that. It is just a matter of following them.

[English]

Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Madam Speaker, "Grant thy servant an understanding heart that I may discern between good and evil." As I took my seat for the very first time in the House, these words of Solomon came to mind, seeking wisdom to lead. Here I was in this place, a place I had dreamt many times that maybe one day I would have opportunity to sit in and represent my fellow citizens. Especially today, as I speak in the House about the chaos, division and anger, not just in front of this place but all across Canada, I hope for wisdom for myself and all my fellow members.

Leaders lead by inspiring those around them to greatness. They inspire a hope that tomorrow will be brighter than today. They lift everyone up, not just those who agree with them. They seek to bring people together, to give the voiceless a voice and a seat at the table. Leaders stand up for every citizen: every Canadian, urban, rural, rich or poor, white collar, blue collar, right and left, regardless of their faith or creed and regardless of their place of origin. A leader gives every ounce of his being to ensure a legacy of prosperity and success for his fellow citizens. However, what we saw out front the last three weeks was a failure of leadership. It was a failure of those entrusted by Canadians with that most solemn of tasks, which is to ensure that our kids will inherit a better future than we received, to ensure that the maple leaf is an undying symbol here and around the world of freedom, pluralism, justice and democracy.

We are here today to talk about the Emergencies Act. I, like many of my colleagues in the House and millions of Canadians, believe that the use of this act at this time is a dramatic overreach. We have heard from many members here about the consequences if the bar is lowered even just a little in the future use of this act, and I echo those concerns.

The fact is, the protests had to end. Every Canadian has a right to peaceful protest, but we do not have the right to park a truck in the middle of a city street for three weeks. In the same way, we have a right to disagree with those who have chosen not to get vaccinated, but we do not have a right to call them racists or misogynists.

I believed my doctor when he told me that vaccination is the best tool, not the only tool, but the best tool to protect my health and my neighbours' health against COVID-19. I also believed my doctor when he told me that we had reached 85% to 90% vaccination rates and should be able to start getting our lives back. We see that starting to happen now. The fact is, Canada is among the most vaccinated countries on earth, and yet some of our fellow citizens simply will not get vaccinated. We need to be okay with that.

While I understand some of the reasons I have heard for vaccine hesitancy, I do not understand all of them, and I do not need to. I do not need to understand my fellow citizens' medical choices to defend their fundamental right to make those choices. That is the beauty of this country. We get to make our own health choices. We do not impose draconian measures on the people we disagree with, and it is also why I echo the words of Pierre Elliott Trudeau, when he said, "For if individuals and minorities do not feel protected against the possibility of the tyranny of the majority...it is useless to ask them to open their hearts and minds to their fellow Canadians."

This debate should never have had to happen. Truckers should never have had to park their trucks in front of Parliament. The divisive rhetoric and demonizing of a minority of Canadians by their own government, whatever the intention, was, quite simply, disgusting.

This is clearly not the first time the political class has used our differences of opinion to divide us for political gain, and it likely will not be the last. We have stopped talking to each other. We are all guilty of it. We listen to our party war rooms on how the polls show us we can slice and dice the electorate to our advantage. We say we have a desire to listen to each other, and then we go on the

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partisan attack. The actions we take right here in the House directly translate to how we treat each other as Canadians.

● (0945)

I do not know if those of us who sit in the privilege of this place in our fancy suits, surrounded by deferential security guards calling us "sir" and "ma'am", truly understand the anger and frustrations as so many Canadians feel their hopes and dreams slipping further and further away. They yearn for politicians to simply talk about their issues, to genuinely represent them.

The contractor in Swift Current, the single dad in Delta, the fisherman in St. Margaret's Bay, the police officer in Yellowknife and the student in Brandon do not care how good our partisan shot was in question period. They do not care how many retweets our clip got. They certainly do not care how much we have out-fundraised our opponents. They just want to know their politicians are working for them. They want to know that their leaders care about their livelihoods, that we care as much about their industry as they do. They want to know we are fighting as hard as we can for them to not have to choose between putting the kids in hockey or putting food on the table. They want to know they will be able to own a home and raise a family in a community their kids can come back to, where they can retire in dignity.

They want to know their government is well managed and ethical and delivers excellent services. It would be nice if their government were just boring. They want to celebrate our great country and the everyday heroes who make this the most magnificent nation on earth. They want us and need us to be here every day, seeking and striving to build our fellow citizens up and bring people together. We need to stop being politicians and start being leaders.

We were elected to represent our communities, tell the hard truths and work hard on behalf of our people. We were not sent here to listen to what the focus groups say or what the polls might say. We were not sent here to represent only those people who put up lawn signs. We were not sent here to appeal to the lowest common denominator; we were sent here to raise it. Canadians do not think of their community as a target seat. It is their hometown, where everyone is a neighbour, where everyone deserves strong representation in this House.

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There are lots of folks in downtown Toronto and Montreal who want lower taxes, and there are a lot of people in rural Alberta who are proud of and really want a strong, publicly funded health care system. There are a lot of people in Vancouver who are fed up with vaccine mandates and a lot of people in Regina who are eager to welcome another new Canadian to their community. There are plenty of Quebecers who want to use Canadian energy, and there are thousands of folks in Manitoba who are proud of their union membership.

Outside of this Ottawa bubble, Canadians are one people, one nation, all working to build a country we can be even more proud of tomorrow than we were yesterday. We are a nation, 38 million strong, all yearning and striving for a country where everyone has a place and everyone has a shot at success. Ours is a country where we might not always agree on every issue, but we always agree that we live in the greatest country in the world and that we deserve a government that is not all things to all people but enables us all to come together, leaving no one behind.

This is a country where a person can be anything they want to be and do anything they want to do. We can give a job to those without one; we can ensure that our next generation can afford a home; we can eradicate poverty; we can come together again; we can break down the walls that divide us and help heal this broken nation, all with an understanding heart. It starts with all of us in the House. Canadians are counting on our leadership.

My message to the Prime Minister and to every one of us in the House is simple. Listen to those with whom there is disagreement and be willing to compromise. Let us work together to build on the common cause of bringing Canadians together, to celebrate all that unites us. To everyone else, let us tone down the heat. Let us be open to hearing opinions other than our own, and let us try to see ourselves on the other side. This is Canada. We can disagree without hating each other.

There is nothing wrong with Canada that cannot be fixed with everything that is right about Canada. Let us cut down the partisan personal attacks and ideological entrenchment; let us start listening to each other and to our communities rather than the political operatives who use the differences between us to stoke fear and anger in the name of winning a few more votes. Let us hold each other to the same standards that Canadians hold their neighbours to, which is to say that we should expect compassion, respect, courage and character from one other. If we can do that, then we will start to bring this country back together again, because that is what leaders do, and Canada needs leaders right now.

This is a critical time. We need only to look south of the border to see the polarizing effects of a divisive political culture and culture war. Let us demand excellence from ourselves. Let us choose what Lincoln called “the better angels of our nature”. Let us go forward together, building each other up and bringing Canadians from all walks of life together in our mutual cause of Canada, our beloved true north, strong and free.

• (0950)

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I just wish to say to the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka that I really liked his speech today and I liked

the tone and the call for unity. To be frank, I would have expected nothing less from having, in the last few months, gotten to know this member of Parliament, who I know represented his constituents not only at the federal level and but also at the municipal level, and whom I count as a friend, both today as a parliamentarian and in the future, when I may not be in the House, hopefully about 10 or 15 years from now.

He quoted Lincoln and that gives me utmost respect for him, as it would for anybody who knows about history, but I will ask the member about the fact that we are having a debate on the Emergencies Act. It is time-limited and it is proportionate. It has gotten the job done.

I wanted to get this member's view on that.

• (0955)

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his gracious comments and kind words. The feeling is certainly quite mutual.

I think that, very specifically in this moment, it is an overreach. However, I think the hon. member heard from me that what concerns me more than anything else are the decades of a political discourse in this country that is designed to divide us. All parties are guilty of it. I will say to anyone who served in municipal politics that if we ever behaved in municipal politics the way we behave in the House, we would not be in office very long. It is disgusting.

It is ripping this country apart and it breaks my heart. We need to do better.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, proclaiming the Emergencies Act is the executive branch's measure of last resort.

Out of respect for those of us in the legislative branch, and given the gravity of the issues, does my colleague think there should be a free vote on this question?

[English]

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Madam Speaker, I will admit to being surprised. I was not expecting that. I think that it absolutely should be. I think that there should be more free votes in this place, frankly. I would simply say, yes, I agree.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I truly want to thank the hon. member across for his honest and heartfelt remarks in the House. We have heard a lot of rhetoric here over the last few days and I know I have certainly been impacted by it, exhausted at the end of the day and taken down by it.

Often, the former leader of the NDP has been named in the House and used against us to create division, so I thank him for quoting Jack Layton just now, in terms of saying that Canada needs to be a place where no one is left behind. That provides me with a lot of hope.

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I agree that this is beyond something that is just about vaccine mandates. This is about the economic divisions we have in our country and the fact that people are terrified that they do not know how they are going to pay for the food they need for their kids, or their mortgage. I simply want to say that I stand ready to work with him to make this a better place for Canada and I hope we can continue to work together in that fashion.

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Madam Speaker, that is the kind of message that Canadians need to hear more of, those of us on all sides of the House seeking to work together. I admit I had an exchange just last night in the lobbies with the member for Edmonton Strathcona and it got heated. I realized that I was guilty of arguing with her in the same way I was to speak about today. I regretted it. I exchanged an email with her this morning to apologize for that.

It is easy to get caught up in the passions of this place. We need to be constantly checking ourselves. We are not here for our passions. We are here to represent people who need us to be here for them.

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is unfortunate that I have to follow my friend, colleague and seatmate from Parry Sound—Muskoka because it is a tough act to follow. I appreciate that I can follow him because I do share a lot of the same concerns as he does. I truly am concerned with the state of affairs in this country, in this place, in this chamber, and I am worried about the direction that our political discussion is going. I would like to touch on that a bit more later on.

To start my remarks, I would like to come back to the issue at hand. We are having a very important vote tonight and I believe I have a duty to share my views on how I will be making my decision when the vote comes tonight.

As I said last week in this chamber, the blockades we are seeing are illegal and they must come to an end. I am pleased to see that they have come to an end. The right to peaceful protest is an integral part of our democracy. It is an important pillar of our democracy. I have told many people back home that almost every day I am here, it seems like there is a different protest happening out by the flame on the lawn of Parliament, and that is an important part of our process.

However, nobody in this country has the right to blockade critical infrastructure. Freedom is limited by how it interferes with the freedom of others, and that is what we saw on display over the past few weeks here in Ottawa and in other places across the country.

I believe that police have and had the ability to handle the situation without invoking the Emergencies Act. We saw that the Ambassador Bridge was cleared and that the Coutts border crossing was cleared without the invocation of the Emergencies Act.

In the past in this country, we have seen terrorist attacks. We have seen the Oka crisis, the Wet'suwet'en blockades, the fisheries crisis, G20 protests and the Stanley Cup riots in Vancouver. None of these instances warranted the use of the Emergencies Act. Quite recently, we have seen the terrible images from B.C. from the Coastal GasLink assault, a situation where the Emergencies Act was not deemed to be necessary.

I believe that the government had many options it could have taken in working with its partners to address the situation, without going so far, because there are such far-reaching powers afforded to the government by invoking this act, including the ability to freeze the bank accounts of Canadians. Many people I know are very concerned that they may have contributed a small amount to support this convoy. They may have bought a shirt or contributed in a very small way because they felt at the time that this convoy, this protest, was going to be peaceful and was going to raise awareness about an issue that they cared about. They felt like they did not have a voice and the protesters were raising that for them.

Those people are the ones I worry could be unfairly impacted by this decision to invoke the Emergencies Act. They are people who contributed, not knowing that there would be unlawful protests, not knowing how the situation would escalate or necessarily who was organizing it.

I also worry, as many have mentioned in this chamber already throughout the weekend and here today, about the precedent that this sets. I believe we are drastically lowering the bar for what constitutes an emergency in this country. That is something that all of us in this chamber have to think very hard about when we have our vote here tonight. We do not want to see widespread use of the Emergencies Act. We do not want this to become something that is almost an everyday reaction because of how serious and far-reaching the powers are. That is why I will be voting against the implementation of the Emergencies Act.

It will be interesting to see how this transpires because an argument could be made that the situation the government needed to address has been dealt with already. I know that is a question that has been put to the members of the government so far.

● (1000)

As I mentioned off the top, I want to pick up on some of the comments that my friend from Parry Sound—Muskoka was making, because the rhetoric I have heard in this debate and in the chamber over the past couple of weeks in question period, I am truly disturbed by. I have been disgusted by it. The polarization that we are seeing across the country, the polarization that we are seeing in this chamber needs to stop.

Last week, the Prime Minister accused our side of standing with people who waved swastikas. Many members of the House have made comments to essentially say that we are racists. This of course could not be further from the truth, but they are seeing a political opportunity and that is what bothers me the most about this. I know these members. These are my colleagues, my friends. I know that it does not seem like it to many people watching at home, but we actually do get along sometimes in this place, especially when we get outside of the chamber doors.

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Many members of the government, the NDP and other parties, I have coffee with them and dinner with them. We crack jokes at the committee table. After a particularly tough debate, maybe we have a drink that is a little stiffer, but to think that those individuals view my colleagues and me as racists, I cannot accept because I surely know that if I believed anybody in the chamber was a racist, I would not be having dinner with them or shaking their hand. Frankly, I do not think I would treat them with any respect whatsoever, and that is the frustrating part because I know it has become political. The Liberals see an opportunity to divide and to wedge and they are capitalizing on it.

We have also heard from members of the government that their leadership, in the last election campaign and since, made a deliberate decision to stigmatize unvaccinated Canadians, driving wedges even further. I do not mean to throw this all on the government. I obviously believe the Prime Minister has an important leadership role to play right now and we need him to lead by example and work to unify us. However, we all have to look inward in this place because we are seeing hateful rhetoric on all sides.

• (1005)

We are seeing people accusing the Prime Minister of being a communist dictator, which is ridiculous and untrue. We are seeing hate and polarization all across this chamber and across this country, and putting an end to it starts right here with every single one of us in the House. We need to turn down the heat. We need to tone down the rhetoric as my friend before me mentioned.

I am shocked that I have to say this in the House. We have a Prime Minister who was democratically elected three times, who commands the confidence of this chamber, yet there are many people across the country who are not seeing it as legitimate and that is a very big problem in our democracy. I disagree with the use of the Emergencies Act. I believe it is far-reaching, but it does not make the Prime Minister a dictator. He is within his right to invoke it.

My plea to all of my colleagues is to think about the words we use in this place. We cannot throw around words like “dictator” and “racist” flippantly. These words matter. They carry weight and when we use these words so casually, we delegitimize the true evils that have been experienced by many people and continue to be experienced by many people in the world.

I am asking all of my colleagues to look at their comments, look at their rhetoric and reassess because we are seeing divisions created that I do not know how we come back from at this point. I am urging all my colleagues to tone down the rhetoric and work to unify. I do not mean to unify in the sense that we all agree on everything. We never will, nor should we, but let us have a respectful debate about the issues. Surely we do not need to resort to name-calling and personal attacks.

• (1010)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I look forward to having breakfast with the hon. member again when the restaurants open. We have had some really good discussions over bacon and eggs, and I am sure there will be more to come when we are allowed to get back into the restaurants, once the health restrictions are lifted.

Since the emergency powers have been granted to police forces, we have seen the police forces working within their own governance. They are not going into the streets and exercising full powers, just the powers that are needed to restore law and order. As we are seeing borders again being put under siege out on the west coast, we do still need the Emergencies Act so police forces can use their discretion in using the powers they have. Hopefully, they will always do so in the professional way they are entitled to.

Could the hon. member comment on having that power available, and the importance of having oversight—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to give the hon. member for Kenora a chance to comment.

Mr. Eric Melillo: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for buying breakfast at the last opportunity we had. As a true fiscal Conservative, I thought it was great for him to offer that.

Again, I have to go back to my comment at the front end of my speech, I do believe that law enforcement had the tools to deal with this situation outside of the Emergencies Act. We have seen many protests throughout our country's history. We have seen crowd control become necessary in a number of situations.

I would have liked to have seen the government look to other options to support policing. As the Prime Minister has said, the Emergencies Act should not be the first, second or third resort. It remains unclear, on this side of the House at least, what those first, second or third resorts were.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am sincerely grateful to the member for Kenora for the tone and tenor of his speech. My hat is off to him. I would invite members of the House to reflect on the impact of that speech and its tone because that is the level of discourse we should hear in the House all the time. I hope we will make progress toward that goal.

My colleague talked about people who are undecided about this act. Some members of the House think the Emergencies Act was necessary to clear Ottawa streets. We still think it was not. Even if we were to accept their point of view, does my colleague think those people could change their minds about the need to hold this vitally important, historic vote tonight now that the streets are clear?

[English]

Mr. Eric Melillo: Madam Speaker, I agree with the premise of the member's question. It is obviously an argument I do not agree with, but to the argument on the government side that the Emergencies Act was necessary to remove the protest.

What we can see now though is that it has gone. I think the emergency has been dealt with. I would ask all members to consider whether or not the Emergencies Act is still needed at this time.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, as a new member of Parliament, I really appreciated listening to my colleagues' words today. It has been a really challenging start to my career as a member of Parliament. To hear the words about us working together has been uplifting, to say the least.

I want to ask a little more about that. I have been here from the onset, when the occupation took over the downtown area around Parliament here in Ottawa. I have been hearing from residents of Ottawa, and hearing from my constituents in Nanaimo—Ladysmith. It is a challenging time. What many people are asking is, "How do we come together?" This resonates me, and it is what you were talking about as well.

There is a lot of misinformation—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I will remind the hon. member to refer to the member as the member for Kenora.

• (1015)

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: Madam Speaker, I am not sure what I said that went awry, but I thank you.

My question is about how we come together. I am seeing a lot of misinformation being used as a tool to divide. The reality is that Canada is not divided. There are many who are vaccinated and many who are opposed to the occupation. I am wondering if the member could speak to how we can come together.

Mr. Eric Melillo: Madam Speaker, that is a difficult question to answer in 20 seconds. I would probably need another 10-minute speech to do so. As I mentioned, it starts with us in this chamber.

Though we will disagree on many things, and I know many members across the way will disagree with me on almost everything, we must do so respectfully, and within a responsible and reasonable scope that most Canadians can be proud of. Right now, I do not think Canadians are proud when they watch what is happening in this chamber.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoyne, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Brampton North.

I think I lucked out with my time slot because I am following two members who spoke so eloquently in this chamber. I want to thank them for that. We all have a role to play as leaders in bringing down the tone and showing that we can actually work together.

I want to thank the Parliamentary Protective Service, the various municipal police forces, as well as the RCMP, the OPP, la Sûreté du Québec, and everyone involved in the last three weeks for their professionalism in bringing this situation to a close. Today, we are discussing whether the Emergencies Act should have been used. I will explain today why I am going to support this motion and why it was necessary.

When I look at it from a situational analysis perspective, over the past 26 days, Ottawa has been under siege. We have seen protests at

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the Ambassador Bridge. We have seen protests at the Coutts border, in Vancouver and here in Ottawa. We have seen the Rideau Centre down the street closed. There are hundreds and hundreds of employees who cannot go to work. We have seen fundraising with a lot of foreign interference toward this occupation. We have seen a lot of misinformation being shared on social media.

I have been in Ottawa for 22 of the last 26 days of the occupation, and I have witnessed first-hand the constant honking, the fireworks in the streets, the open fires and citizens afraid to go outside. One of the most disturbing sights was someone jumping on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. As the mother and mother-in-law of three serving members, this was incredibly difficult for me to witness.

I have seen people being taunted in the streets for wearing a mask. We have had staff members yelled at, one of whom had feces thrown at her, for coming to work. We have seen reporters being assaulted. We have seen the stockpiling of propane and fuel. We have seen this progression, despite measures that had been taken by local police.

Our government has been in contact with the mayor the whole time. We have also been in contact with the chief of police, the premier and the various premiers of the locations where we have seen these protests. We deployed RCMP officers and tactical police troops; had joint intelligence and operational teams, and community liaison teams; and convened a table with relevant federal and municipal partners. Despite these efforts, it continued.

When we look at the timeline of events, we saw very clearly an escalation. We saw the potential for this to increase. I know that Wellington Street is clear right now, but we also know that protesters are currently in Vankleek Hill. We know that protesters are just south of us waiting. That is why I believe we are just in invoking the Emergencies Act.

My colleague from Windsor West has said multiple times in the last three days that the Ambassador Bridge is not secure. Two blocks away, there are protesters. It is a very volatile situation right now. It is evolving quickly. I trust the police forces, and the intelligence they have, to keep us safe.

The laws that we currently have on the books were not sufficient. One of the most difficult things for me to see were children at these protests. The invoking of the Emergencies Act will make it punishable to bring children into these protests. It also prevents travel to the Hill and through border crossings by those intent on breaking laws. It prevents foreign extremists from joining these protests. It directs tow companies to assist in removing vehicles parked in our streets.

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Invoking the Emergencies Act also authorizes financial institutions to freeze the funds of this illegal activity. We are talking dark money. We are talking about using crowdfunding to avoid FINTRAC rules. It also allowed the police forces to save days of delay in deputizing various police forces.

• (1020)

This is not something we take lightly. When this piece of legislation was drafted in 1987, the safeguards were put in place. We are having this debate. There will be a vote. A joint committee of parliamentarians will be struck. There will be an inquiry. There will be a report tabled in the House after 60 days to determine whether or not the invoking of this act was justifiable.

I heard a lot over the last couple of days about listening. I make a point of reaching out to the citizens who write to me, especially those who are angry and do not agree, because I really want to hear their point. Let us be honest. When most people write to an MP's office, it is not to say we are doing a great job; it is because they are angry about something or not happy with something. I make every effort to hear them. While we may not agree on a position, it is important that I hear them. I am pretty sure this is the same across all parties. We have those discussions in caucus. We share what we are hearing on the ground. Those conversations are happening. People are listening. We are listening. We have a duty to listen, and we are.

We are dealing with a very scary situation in Canada where people feel empowered to say awful things to others, whether it be on social media from the safety of their keyboard or attacking them personally. I have no problem with someone questioning my position on something or questioning a policy, but when we start taking personal attacks, we have gone too far.

I think there are a lot of questions to be asked coming out of what has happened in the last month here in Canada. My hon. colleague from Timmins—James Bay brought this up, I believe, on Saturday. I may be mixing up the days after being here debating for three days. He said there should be a public inquiry into what happened here, in addition to the parliamentary inquiry that is stipulated in the Emergencies Act.

Ottawa has festivities all the time. It is well versed in crowd control. I looked up online what streets are closed normally to vehicular traffic during the Canada Day celebrations. How did those trucks get on Wellington Street? How did a crane get put beside the Prime Minister's office? Where was the protection for the protesters walking in between the parked trucks? There will be a lot of questions to ask after this through various channels, levels of government and agencies, and I welcome that, so this never happens again.

I urge colleagues across the aisle, as well as on my side, to be mindful of the words we use and how we express ourselves, and to ask questions about what really happened here. How is it that an illegal protest like this was allowed to get so far? Let us be honest. If the complexion of this protest were different, this would have been called something entirely different.

• (1025)

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the tone of her speech. We are here

to have debate and discourse, not necessarily to agree but to get to the root of the issues.

The real point I want to get to is this. Does the member believe there is still justification for this act? She hinted at some of her concerns. The Emergencies Act is by far the most draconian and powerful piece of legislation the federal government has, so we cannot use it just to protect against a potential threat; it is there to deal with a national emergency that we are dealing with right now. I would like her comments on whether she thinks it is justified to still have this act in place now.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Madam Speaker, I first want to thank the member opposite for his service to Canada. I know he served in the Canadian Armed Forces.

Yes, I do. As I said, when the decision to invoke this act was made, it was measured, targeted and timely. We know now that within two days the Ottawa police were able to make great advances in removing the illegal protesters from downtown Ottawa and various locations, but they have not gone home. There were protests across Canada, and they continue. Police are in the best position to tell us when they feel the situation is under control. The safeguards are there and when it is time to revoke the act, we will.

[Translation]

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Longueuil—Charles-LeMoyne for her speech.

I would like to pick up on the part where she talked about the Ambassador Bridge. Several people have talked about it this morning.

She said that there are still protesters a few blocks away from there. To be clear, these are protesters, not occupiers. This is not a siege. The Ambassador Bridge blockade was dismantled before the Emergencies Act was invoked. There was no need for the act. The situation was dealt with.

Why adopt a draconian measure when the authorities already have everything they need to take action?

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Madam Speaker, the reality is that there were children on the Ambassador Bridge. We all knew that there might be more violence. The OPP and the Premier of Ontario asked us to implement this measure. We invoked the Emergencies Act at the request of the province and the police.

[English]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her work on the industry committee as the former chair. It was very much a collegial environment.

As I have noted several times in interventions, the Ambassador Bridge blockade has moved from Huron Church Road and is now along city streets. A couple of convoys have been intercepted since the act has been in place.

Does the member find it ironic that a private American billionaire now benefits from traffic being quickly rerouted, when small businesses and their employees cannot work because the blockades and cement barriers are now preventing people from getting to their businesses along the corridor?

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Madam Speaker, I enjoyed working with my colleague when I was on the INDU committee.

I have heard the member explain throughout this debate the precarious situation on the ground right now at the Ambassador Bridge, the fact that there are still protesters blocks away who can retake that bridge. There are issues with respect to the management and ownership of that bridge that I would happily discuss with him. I know he needs to make sure that the people in his community are able to feel safe, that businesses in his community can continue to thrive and that we are able to move beyond this awful period in our history.

• (1030)

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, being able to rise today on this issue is an opportunity I do not take lightly nor for granted. It is only in a few democratic countries like ours that the voice of someone like me would even be heard or carry any weight.

Over the last several days, we have heard many points of view on the invocation of the Emergencies Act and regarding the details outlined in the declaration of the act tabled in the House. After hearing much of the debate in the House and outside this place, I want to touch upon some key issues that have been misconstrued or misunderstood.

The first is that this is just a normal truckers' protest. Anyone thinking that is naive as to the elements that exist within this protest, so I will address that. I also want to address that this is not just a protest representing truck drivers. If people claim that it is, they really have missed the mark. I represent a large demographic of truck drivers in my riding, and these are not their real concerns. I will also address the issue of whether this act was necessary and whether it is still necessary at this time. Lastly, I would like to show the real difference that exists between the Emergencies Act and the War Measures Act.

Let us first address the claim that this is just a normal protest. If that is what people believe, then they are either naive or willfully ignoring the dangerous truths that exist within this protest. We have heard from many criminologists and cybersecurity experts over the last several weeks that this is not the intention of this protest.

We are not new to protests in Parliament, and neither is Ottawa. Ottawa is a place that has had protests for centuries, always consist-

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ing of people wanting their say on policy or wanting to have their issues heard. In fact, this government has never silenced the voices of those who wish to protest. I, myself, have protested many times on the Hill in my younger years, and I strongly believe in one's ability to do so.

However, blocking a city for over three weeks, shutting down its businesses, and disturbing the mental and physical health of its people is not a protest, not to mention the irreparable harm that has been done by shutting down our borders for over 18 days.

As the ambassador to the UN and former leader of the Liberal Party of Canada, Mr. Bob Rae, put it the other day, "A truck is not a speech. A horn is not a voice. An occupation is not a protest. A blockade is not freedom, it blocks the liberty of all. A demand to overthrow a government is not a dialogue. The expression of hatred is not a difference of opinion. A lie is not the truth."

On my way in today, for the first time in quite some time, I felt some freedom. I am sure the people of Ottawa are feeling freedom today.

Furthermore, the protests have had varying ideological grievances, with demands ranging from ending the public health measures to overthrowing a democratically elected government. While the latter is non-negotiable, the public health restrictions have been put in place by most governments around the world to varying degrees, depending on the advice of their public health, the capacities of their health systems and the willingness of their governments to have high death tolls versus their desire to protect the vulnerable.

Public health is, and should be, every government's number one priority. This is not tyranny, nor is it authoritarianism. Those making these outlandish claims have really minimized what many people living in Canada experienced before fleeing from countries that have these types of regimes. Yes, we have all been inconvenienced. Yes, we are all tired and frustrated. The good news is that we are seeing a relaxation of measures across this country.

• (1035)

Despite what a few want us to believe, Canadians, in large part, have done all of the right things to help get us through this pandemic. They have gotten vaccinated. Over 90% of Canadians, and over 90% of Canadian truckers also, have been vaccinated. That is an overwhelming majority. Due to the work that they have done, we will soon see that many measures will be lifted.

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The Conservatives may want to paint this protest as just truckers voicing their opinion, but it is more than that. It is an ideologically motivated group of people who, for weeks on end, had been plotting and planning the overthrow of this government and other criminal activities. We have seen that. A lot of people want to forget, but we saw it at our southern Alberta border. At Coutts, we saw over 13 individuals be arrested. When we take a look at their backgrounds, they are quite astonishing. The plans that they had in place to kill our federal RCMP officers are not something to minimize. We should understand the grave danger that some of these people pose.

We are also seeing congressional committees down south in the U.S. investigating Facebook and other social media giants to see where a lot of the push and motivation for this trucker convoy has come from. It has come from outside of our borders. A lot of the funding has also come from outside of our borders.

What is very interesting is the correlation that we found between those who supported the January 6 insurrection at the Washington Capitol, and those who have supported this trucker convoy. There is a great overlap. Over 1,100 of the same donors donated to both causes.

Furthermore, blocking our trade corridors is not just a protest. Blocking our trade corridors has had a substantial impact on the truck drivers who live in my riding, and on the auto industry that is also in my riding. Many workers have been displaced due to the protest. I hesitate to continue to call it a protest, because it has been a siege and occupation of our land.

There has also been a lack of transparency as to what the funds that had been raised by this convoy, this occupation, would be used for. Therefore, I think it was very important for the government to impose the Emergencies Act at this time, to make sure that we could stop that money from getting into the wrong hands. There has been a very big lack of transparency.

I know many will argue today that the borders have been cleared, and thankfully Ottawa for the most part has been cleared. This measure also allows us to make sure that this does not happen again within days. We are starting to see it in different places in this country, so we need to make sure we keep this act in place for the remainder of the 30 days.

The second thing that I wanted to talk about concerns the truckers in my riding. The truckers in my riding have been calling me, talking about the issues that they face. They have been facing long waits. They have been stuck at times without food or water at the borders. This is not fair. They have real issues. They have issues of pay. They have labour issues that they want addressed. If it were a real trucker protest, that is what the protest should have been about.

Some will argue that the Emergencies Act was not needed, but we have heard interim Ottawa police chief Steve Bell say that the Emergencies Act and the province's state of emergency provided the police with the resources they needed to push back the demonstrators. It provided them with the ability to block off the city of Ottawa so that further protesters did not come to encourage the siege. It has given them the tools that were necessary, and I would say that many of the premiers requested these tools all along—

• (1040)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We will go to questions now.

The hon. member for Peace River—Westlock.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, in the spring of 2020, we saw rail blockades across the country. At that point, when Quebec was running out of propane and people were unable to heat their own homes across the country, there was no mention of the invocation of the Emergencies Act. What we did see in that case was an army of cabinet ministers going out across the country speaking to whomever they could in order to resolve the situation.

Why was that tactic not taken in this particular case?

Ms. Ruby Sahota: Madam Speaker, in this case, we had a series of blockades across the country closing our borders. These did irreparable damage: over \$390 million of damage a day. The city was taken siege for over three weeks, not to mention that the mayors of the cities and the premiers were calling on the federal government to intervene and implement measures to give them the tools and resources that they needed. Even the premier of Alberta, although he is stating something else today, wrote to the federal government wanting us to do more. Therefore, the government has listened and done what was needed.

[Translation]

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Brampton North for her speech.

She talked about the tools that are now available and that we needed. I would like her to give me a list of the tools that were used and for her to explain to me why they were not necessary in Sarnia, Fort Erie, Vancouver, Quebec City and Coutts.

[English]

Ms. Ruby Sahota: Madam Speaker, in fact, Coutts was requiring them, and had a very difficult time getting the tow trucks that were needed. Many of the law enforcement agencies complained that this was a key problem they had. They were not able to get the private resources that were needed, but that has become a lot easier ever since the Emergencies Act was put in place. We heard right here, from Ottawa police chief Steve Bell, that the act and the powers that were given within it helped the police to achieve what they did over the last few days here in Ottawa. They would not have been able to stop people from coming into the borders of this city without these measures.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Qujannamiik, Uqaqtittiji.* In my previous question, I asked the member for Oxford, who also happens to be on the Standing Joint Committee for the Scrutiny of Regulations, if he had read the emergency measures regulations, to which he said that he had not.

Could the member confirm whether the places listed in subsections 1(a) to 1(f) of the regulations, such as airports and international bridges, have been under threat, which necessitated the declaration of the Emergencies Act? Indeed, do they continue to be a security risk? *Qujannamiik*.

Ms. Ruby Sahota: Madam Speaker, absolutely, and I would like to thank my colleague for bringing that up.

Our infrastructure was under threat and continues to be under threat in this country. That is why it is so important to make sure that we vote in favour of the implementation of this act today. This is a time-limited act. It is targeted to where it is needed. Therefore, I think it is absolutely the best measure to have in place to be able to curtail what is happening in our country today.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to enter into this discussion this morning after the last few days. I thought the member for Brampton North made a number of very compelling points.

In reflecting on an insurrection, in a lot of the debate over the last number of days, some members in this place have said to others, “Well, what makes you think they could be capable of succeeding in an insurrection?”

I would ask the hon. member for Brampton North this. In any reasonable universe, is the test for sedition how likely it is that it would succeed?

• (1045)

Ms. Ruby Sahota: Madam Speaker, I would say to my colleague and to the House that we have received lots of warnings, and we are continuing to receive warnings, from our security and cybersecurity experts that Canada and many democratically elected governments are under a real threat. We have seen proof of that here within our own borders. Weapons and armour have been seized. Plots have been revealed. That should be enough to wake us all up.

Mr. Frank Caputo: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Twice I referenced the Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act, and I referenced a specific provision that was in a schedule while the act is in force. I came to learn from a very sharp-eyed person that the schedule is not in force, so I withdraw my comments that were made with respect to section 21 in that schedule.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): That is duly noted.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Montcalm.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix.

I taught political philosophy for 30 years. The democratic ideal is at the heart of my political involvement. That is why I am a sovereignist, because the political sovereignty of the people is the very foundation of the democratic ideal.

The debate that is coming to a close today is one of the most serious debates I have ever participated in in the House, because the

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Emergencies Act is the most powerful and coercive action that a nation governed by the rule of law can impose in a democracy.

Government by decree is the antithesis of the exercise of legislative power. Such decrees cannot be made based on feelings, frustration with what others are saying, or ideological differences—whether far left or far right—or simply to cover up incompetence on the pretext of a legal vacuum.

It is not with joy in my heart or without emotion that I rise today. I never would have thought that the 10-year-old-boy from a working-class neighbourhood of Montreal who was forced to walk by armoured tanks and soldiers armed with machine guns every morning for the duration of the October crisis, because his school was right next to the police headquarters on Parthenais Street, would end up in the House of Commons 52 years later debating the Emergencies Act.

I remember the fear and the intense climate of suspicion that gripped the neighbourhood every time there was a police operation or arrest, whether or not it made the news, involving people we considered to be perfectly ordinary, like us, with no criminal record and far from being terrorists, as we rightly thought.

Despite the emotion I am feeling by recalling this memory, I never would have failed in my duty to add my voice to that of my colleagues in this debate that started long before January 29, in the wake of a global health crisis that has affected our lives, everyone's quality of life, that has left thousands of families in mourning, that for two years now has challenged our sense of solidarity and mutual goodwill and that gives new meaning to the old adage, “One person's freedom ends where another's begins”.

This should lead us as parliamentarians to be more careful than ever not to set a precedent, but also to be as thorough as possible in order to maintain the increasingly fragile trust the public has in their democratic institutions.

The issue here is not the opinions or the interpretation that different people can have of democracy or freedom. As we saw in the streets for 23 days, and in many other countries of the world throughout history, people can say and do many things in the name of freedom and democracy. However, in a country governed by the rule of law and in a self-proclaimed free and democratic society, the legitimacy of the government's power in relation to its citizens must be guided by and measured against a fundamental question that must be answered to prevent abuse of power.

What are the limits to the government's power to intervene?

My questions arise only out of the desire to understand the necessity of invoking this act. I would point out that it is special legislation, which, let us not forget, was developed in 1988 to replace the War Measures Act so that the executive branch, meaning the government, any government, regardless of its political stripes, can never again claim the absolute power to trample rights and freedoms for political purposes, nor engage in abuse of power with impunity.

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I recognize that it is not the same act. Much like Thomson and Thompson are not the same, these acts are not the same. With this act, however, the government has brought out the heavy artillery. In 1988, parliamentarians created some safeguards, and one of those safeguards was us, as members of Parliament. We have a duty to question the legitimacy of the Emergencies Act, which was invoked in response to a situation we all now know, when the government stood by for 21 days.

• (1050)

To all those who claim we are living in a dictatorship, I do want to point out that totalitarian and dictatorial regimes rarely hold the kinds of debates we have been having today. These types of debates are the essence of a parliamentary democracy, of a representative democracy, but we also have to live up to that responsibility and maintain credibility. Unfortunately, the sequence of events and the failure to implement the necessary measures in response to the siege of the federal capital do not justify these orders.

How did we wind up here? According to the Emergencies Act, the government had a responsibility to consult the provinces and report on those consultations to establish that there was a nationwide emergency. Seven out of 10 premiers opposed the use of the Emergencies Act in their provinces because they did not feel it was necessary. Two of the three other premiers said that they did not need this special legislation.

What national crisis are the Liberals talking about when they continue to claim that the Emergencies Act must absolutely be confirmed? We are hearing that it is useful, but it must be proven indispensable. Even the Quebec National Assembly saw fit to distance itself from the process and unanimously adopted a motion against the application of the law in Quebec. It reads:

That the National Assembly be concerned about the current disruptions in Ontario and around certain federal border crossings;

That it affirm that no emergency situation currently justifies the use of special legislative measures in Québec;

That it ask the Canadian government to not apply the federal Emergencies Act in Québec;

That, lastly, the National Assembly reiterate the importance of close collaboration between the federal government and the Québec government, in particular to ensure peace of mind and safety for citizens in the Outaouais region who are affected by the ongoing demonstrations in Ottawa and who could have to bear the brunt of any further deterioration of the situation.

The Government of Canada has ignored the requirement to demonstrate a national emergency. How can it claim a national emergency when seven premiers say they do not need this legislation? How can we draw any other conclusion besides that the usual laws were sufficient?

I can understand that the members sitting on the government side feel obliged to support their government's shaky logic and failure to provide the required proofs. However, I am of the opinion that there should be a free vote on such a fundamental issue.

This minority government did not do its homework, but because it has the support of the NDP, it does not matter if it fulfills the obligations set out in the act. As we speak, the siege in Ottawa has ended. The so-called national crisis that the government failed to demonstrate no longer exists. In the circumstances, I wonder if the NDP is aware that by voting with the government, it is an accom-

plice to setting a dangerous precedent by accepting such a low bar and that, one day, a majority government may use it to do something even worse.

The government failed to fulfill another requirement, that of demonstrating, in accordance with section 3 of the act, that any other law of Canada, the regular laws, cannot effectively deal with the emergency situation of this alleged national crisis. Not only did the government not prove this, but it did not even try. My colleagues from Joliette and Rivière-du-Nord eloquently and methodically explained that existing legislation was sufficient to resolve the situation and that seven out of 10 premiers were opposed to the invocation of the Emergencies Act in their provinces, because they had the situation under control. This clearly demonstrates that the conditions of section 3 were not met.

In conclusion, I invite members of all parties to vote according to the highest principles that should limit the exercise of the government's power to ensure its legitimacy and guarantee the rule of law. This will result in a parliamentary democracy where not only can the general will of the people be expressed, but also where different points of view can be heard, rather than being relegated to the streets.

• (1055)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I find it interesting that the member cited the Quebec National Assembly and the unanimous motion. The Province of Alberta wrote Ottawa asking for assistance. It specifically cited towing. The Province of Manitoba pleaded with Ottawa to get engaged and assist, which was only two or three days prior to the enactment of the Emergencies Act. However, both of those provinces say it is not necessary. There could come a point in time when it could be necessary and it would be an option. It is a tool for law enforcement and others to consider.

What does the member opposite have to say about my home province of Manitoba in particular, which was pleading for federal involvement, even though today it says it is not necessary?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, a very specific and targeted order would have been sufficient to address the towing issue. The government did not have to get out the heavy artillery and invoke the Emergencies Act simply because it would be useful. The act should only be used when absolutely necessary.

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it should be underlined that, while the Government of Alberta clearly had been engaged with the federal government, at no point did it ask for the imposition of the Emergencies Act. As my colleague pointed out, a majority of premiers, including the Premier of Alberta and the Premier of Quebec, opposed the use of the Emergencies Act.

We have a situation where a bare majority of parliamentarians, as far as we know, support the use of the Emergencies Act, and a majority of premiers and many members of Parliament are very concerned about it. This sets a very dangerous precedent.

Is the member aware if the Quebec government is contemplating participating in legal action, along with Alberta, against the use of the Emergencies Act in this case?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, I have no idea, but it is clear that the order does not meet the criteria set out in section 3 of the act.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I would like to tell my esteemed Bloc Québécois colleague that I completely agree that it is important that we vote on this today. It would be better to have a free vote, and I am wondering if the Bloc Québécois agrees with that.

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, obviously, my colleague understood the questions I asked earlier.

I think that our colleagues opposite should indeed be able to vote freely, without any party lines, on an issue as important as this one. Invoking the Emergencies Act is the ultimate act that the executive branch can take, and it should therefore respect our legislative authority.

• (1100)

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Madam Speaker, could what we saw and went through this weekend lead Canadians to lose confidence in their government?

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, I think the police did a remarkable job this weekend. However, even though the chief of the Ottawa Police Service found the Emergencies Act helpful, I think the police operation could have gone ahead even if the Emergencies Act had not been invoked, simply by using the laws that were already in place.

In that regard, it is possible that people are losing confidence in their democratic institutions. However, it is important that whatever happens in the streets can be discussed in this parliamentary forum. If we do not live up to the highest standards of democracy, these debates will end up taking place in the streets.

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would first like to point out that I realize that we are repeating ourselves. According to a communication sciences principle, a message needs to be heard at least 20 times for it to become embedded in the collective psyche. Accordingly, I am honoured to be the 25th or 26th Bloc Québécois member to speak on behalf of our party.

I applaud the commitment of all my colleagues in the Bloc Québécois to once again echo the unanimous voice of the Quebec National Assembly to demonstrate that the use of the War Measures Act is not warranted in the context of the protests that occurred over the past three weeks in Ottawa.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I would remind the member for Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île

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d'Orléans—Charlevoix that we are not debating the War Measures Act.

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: I apologize to all members of Parliament for this slip of the tongue. It was unintentional.

I will resume my speech.

If we confirm the application of this legislation this evening because of the situation we went through, we will be demonstrating that what is meant to be the last resort for a government is being used with complete disregard for the two key components that absolutely justify its use.

This will send a message to the public that if they decide to go through with a planned protest, the government will pretend not to know about it and allow the protesters to set up, get settled, disturb the public, shove and intimidate journalists, install hot tubs and occupy the streets for three weeks. It will not matter in any case, because the government will apply the Emergencies Act while the Prime Minister stays at his cottage.

I am sorry, but that is not how government management works. Planned protests are legitimate, permitted and even good to have in a democratic society when a segment of the population wants to share a message it considers to be urgent and important, whether we agree with it or not. It is our cherished democracy that allows it. Let us not forget the importance of this democracy. Trivializing it, controlling it or, worse, ignoring it sends a really bad message.

When there is an illegal occupation that includes illegally parking in the streets or setting up stages without authorization, if hateful slogans are being used against elected members and the press, then we need to ask law enforcement, our police forces, to intervene. The police services were the ones who were called to take action, to organize and to request support from their counterparts in neighbouring nations, for example those from the Sûreté du Québec. I want to commend them and thank them from the bottom of my heart.

Everything was done properly and with a great deal of respect for the protesters, who were emboldened by the passage of time and the dismissive attitude of their head of government. I found this situation difficult, since people need to be heard and listened to. They must be given some basic consideration, before an act like this is thrown at them. Let me be clear. I do not support the deplorable and punishable actions taken by some individuals. I condemn these actions, but I also condemn the lack of consideration and contempt the Prime Minister has shown for these people he was elected to represent and to whom he is ultimately accountable.

I want to take this opportunity to commend the police for their exemplary and extremely diligent interventions since the occupation started in Ottawa. They have been calm and effective, under the circumstances, given that there were many children on site. It was particularly sad to see the government stand by for so long knowing these children were there. The government is meant to govern, which requires being a leader, listening, being open and showing diplomacy. These are invaluable and appropriate tools that could have resolved this crisis or, at the very least, prevented it from escalating.

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This leads me to say that it was not justified and that it will not be justified for the government to invoke the Emergencies Act. To have justification, two conditions must be met, in a very clear and, especially, unequivocal manner. First, there must be a dangerous and urgent situation. It can be said that it was dangerous and urgent, but who really caused it? Second, it must be impossible to address the situation with ordinary laws.

To justify invoking the act under the present circumstances, we would need to add one or two conditions to it that are just not there. I want to emphasize that if the House chooses to support the application of this act and if, in a momentary lapse, our NDP colleagues approve the use of this act, it is crucial that the Bloc Québécois obtain the exemption to that application of the act for Quebec.

• (1105)

To support my position, I would like to quote from an interview the Minister of Public Safety gave on the CBC.

He was asked the following question: Is there a link between the people arrested and the accounts that were frozen? Are they the same people?

Here is how the minister replied: These actions are taken by law enforcement; they are independent of politics.

I wonder then how the Emergencies Act has changed things. Voting in favour of invoking this legislation sends the wrong message not only to the public, but also to the rest of the world. All parliamentarians in this House will bear responsibility for the repercussions of invoking this legislation and the perception of its application in these kinds of circumstances.

We are talking about setting some kind of precedent, to which future governments in this place will have to refer. I would like to point out to our NDP colleagues that if they vote to invoke this legislation, they will be contributing to the normalization of its subsequent use, which will lower the perception of the importance of this legislation's nature as a tool of last resort.

If by today's actions the public's perception of this law, as well as that of the various responders, becomes distorted, that could pose a serious risk to everyone's safety in a future national crisis, which we do not wish for, but could well happen one day.

Everyone will remember this day. They will hear an announcement that the government voted in favour of the Emergencies Act and will say that the situation does not have to be all that critical. They will say that Parliament Hill will have to again be overrun by trucks and signs.

In the future, the public may overlook a real threat and, because we did not have the judgment needed today to correctly assess whether to use the Emergencies Act or not, we will be a party to this misguided lapse.

If the NDP is going to be irresponsible and vote in favour of applying this law, I would ask that the government at least not apply the act to Quebec and the provinces that expressed their keen desire that it not apply in their territory.

• (1110)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I believe the member is so wrong. What is happening, what has happened and the potential threat of what could happen is very real.

The shutdown of downtown Ottawa by an illegal protest and blockades has had a profound and negative impact in many ways. That is not to mention the blocking of the international border where literally half a billion dollars plus of financial activity daily was being blocked. We saw the loss of hundreds of jobs, going into the thousands, as a direct result. We saw a community, the nation's capital, being held captive.

The legislation is there to ensure that kids are forbidden from being used as part of a barricade. It is there to ensure there is a financial consequence for irresponsible behaviour.

Why does the Bloc not support the rule of law in Canada, which includes Quebec?

[Translation]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Madam Speaker, I would say to my colleague opposite that the priority is not to neglect the rule of law, but to apply it correctly.

I will ask him the following questions.

Who let the barricades go up? Who let us get to this point as a result of a failure to act, complacency and lack of leadership?

[English]

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Madam Speaker, that was an excellent speech. The member has clearly made the case that the threshold for invoking the Emergencies Act has not been met.

Due process is required to happen under the rule of law. Could the member speak a little about the fact that due process did not happen, that there was a complete lack of process, and that the government moved from A to Z unmerited?

[Translation]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very relevant question.

Indeed, my background in labour relations taught me that a gradual negotiation process is required to deal with conflicts. First, you have to acknowledge the other party's position, assess why that person or group feels the way they do, consider what they are saying and then negotiate a plan to resolve the crisis.

The government could have gone through the steps. It could have met with the other party, negotiated, made proposals, and negotiated again, all to keep this protest relatively peaceful.

I think the government's failure to do that is what led to the terrible situation we are in now.

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague from Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix for her passionate speech.

She spoke a lot about the value of democracy and about our duty to protect this democracy and live up to our responsibilities here in this place.

I would like to hear her thoughts on the dangerous precedent this will set if, and I emphasize if, the left wing of the Liberal Party continues to support the government and votes in favour of applying this act, which is not needed. Even if it had been needed, it certainly is not now, since there is no one left in the streets.

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Madam Speaker, I thank my Bloc Québécois colleague for his good question.

I will reiterate my position. The danger is that, if we exercise poor judgment here today and support the use of the Emergencies Act, then our actions might later be interpreted in a way that could jeopardize the future of many people because they will think that the Emergencies Act can be used to resolve deadlocks and protests, when it is supposed to be a law of last resort. The danger is that the public may become ambivalent. That is serious, and I am once again asking all members of Parliament to think very seriously about how they are going to vote this evening.

● (1115)

[English]

Mr. Corey Tochor (Saskatoon—University, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour anytime to rise on my feet in this House. It is unfortunate that we are rising today to debate the Emergencies Act. It is an act whose use is not merited right now. I will outline my reasoning for voting against this tonight and why I hope that the NDP will join with us, stay relevant and hopefully support our position that it is not needed right now.

To get understanding, we need to ask ourselves how and why: How are we here and why are we here debating this, and why did we have protesters on the streets of Ottawa? It goes to the function of parliamentarians, which is to listen. We may not agree with the protesters and we may not agree with all views in Canada, but we listen, hopefully to have a better understanding of our fellow Canadians. That is what has been unfortunately lacking in this place.

We have gone through two years of this pandemic with these difficulties. Everyone is tired. Everyone wants this to be over. The good news is that in Canada it is slowly becoming very apparent that the pandemic is coming to an end. Mandates are being lifted across Canada. Freedom is on the move again. We are able to take back our lives. The Super Bowl was just played in California, with 85,000 people in that stadium, and we did not see a spike of COVID cases afterward. Why is that? Part of it is that vaccines have helped.

We are one of the most highly vaccinated countries in the world. We have therapeutic options now available. Also, the variant that is dominant right now is milder. In the past, this is how pandemics have ended, with the dominant strain becoming a mild virus that would go through our population and we would have natural immunity layered on top of all the other measures that I have outlined. That is why we are coming to the end of it. We are at the tail end of

this. Province after province is lifting its restrictions. Countries, significant western world countries, are removing the mandates. We are so close to being in that spot.

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Why would the Liberal government in January, last month, at the end of this pandemic, after claiming that truck drivers were front-line heroes, the people who literally fed us and delivered the goods that sustained us for these last two years, who called them heroes for the first two years, at the waning end of this pandemic, move them from heroes to zeros? At the stroke of a pen, the Prime Minister decided that at the tail end we are going to have this mandate imposed when they cross the border. That was a month ago. We are talking about a small portion of the Canadian population who, for the most part, are vaccinated and by themselves for 22 hours of the day, and the Liberals targeted those people. Worse than targeting them, they insulted them. They divided us.

As this convoy was getting started, the Prime Minister called out that the people in this freedom convoy were separatist, nothing more than people who want to tear our country apart. They got to Ottawa, and I have never seen as many Canadian flags in a group on Parliament Hill. These are not separatists; they are patriots. They were called sexist and racist. I would hope that the Liberal members who are here had the opportunity to meet with some of these fellow Canadians and hear their stories. They would hear and notice that they are from every nationality, that every corner of the world is represented by those truckers and the people who joined them. They were not racist. They were not sexist. They were not separatists.

We had the Prime Minister piling on, for what purpose? One would only surmise that it is for his political benefit, and that is wrong. A lot of wrong things happened in the last two years, but in the last two weeks or the last month there have been profound changes in the way I view our institution and the way Canadians view this place and their government, and it is not for the better.

● (1120)

We are in a different spot. The Queen, at 95 years old, caught COVID. With all the precautions that are out there, the bubble-wrapped Queen, at her age, caught COVID, and she is working through it. We are definitely in a new phase of this pandemic. We are coming to the end, so why pile on these mandates that only divide Canadians, not unify us?

The powers that the Emergencies Act gives the government are profoundly wrong, and we know this to be true. In a free society, we do not freeze bank accounts. That is the most horrendous thing that failed regimes around the world do. In their dying days, they print money, they remove civil liberties and they freeze bank accounts.

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It is not that difficult to view what is going on in Canada through a lens of mistrust. We need leadership to bring healing once we are through this pandemic. When all the mandates are removed, and I believe we are weeks or less away from that, we are going to have huge divisions that need to be mended. Invoking the Emergencies Act only divides Canadians that much more at a time we should not be divided.

That is a little bit about why we are here, but how are we here? How was it that a protest would go on for as many days as it did? When the inquiry takes place, one of the questions and one of the things to analyze is what happened at the start. For weeks, or days at least, we would turn on the news and see the news of this convoy coming to Ottawa. People were lining the highways in the cold just to wave at the convoy.

Even if someone does not agree with convoy's message, they must take a step back and understand what it must take for people to give up all they had in their lives to get on the road and come to Ottawa to fight for what they believe in and to have their message heard by the government. The reports that they were coming to Ottawa were no secret.

When the convoy got here, they were directed or welcomed by the City of Ottawa's electronic signs that said "convoy turn here", and they headed downtown. When they got to the downtown core of Ottawa, what were they told? "Go ahead, park on Wellington. You have to leave on Sunday, but you are free to come and break this law. You can set up shop and you can protest."

In Canada, we have the right to protest. It is still a right. We need to provide a space for people to protest, to disagree with their government and to let their message be heard. I believe that when the inquiry looks at what the first mistakes were, they will turn out to be it was the Liberal Prime Minister's pressure that led the Liberal mayor of Ottawa to invite them down to set up shop on Wellington Street. That was the message they heard when they got to Ottawa.

People are now second-guessing themselves and saying we needed intelligence reports because we did not know what was coming. Turn on the news: The whole country knew where they were going and why they were going there. Their livelihoods were threatened. We were at the tail end of a pandemic, a pandemic in which they were treated like heroes for the first two years for delivering goods, crossing the border and putting their lives at risk.

In the dying days of this pandemic, as mandates were being lifted across Canada, what did our Prime Minister decide to do? He decided to divide Canadians, just like he did in the last election. Leading into that election, he said, "No, we do not need mandates." He must have received some polling information that showed otherwise, and he decided to use this divisive weapon against his own people to divide Canadians for his political gain.

I will be voting against this motion because it is not right. It is not right to freeze people's bank accounts and it is not right to insult the hard-working Canadians who make up that convoy.

• (1125)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the premise of the member's argument from the beginning

was about Liberals putting in the restrictions in regard to long-haul truck drivers crossing the border. I have a news flash for the member: Long-haul truck drivers cannot drive into the States. That is not because of Canada; it is because the United States of America will not let them in unless they are vaccinated.

The member's focus then was on Ottawa. Does he not recognize that the convoys and the blockades are still a threat at our international borders? Think for once of the real victims here, the people who are losing their jobs and the community members who are losing their ability to walk peacefully around their neighbourhoods. Does he not recognize those people?

Mr. Corey Tochor: Madam Speaker, I will correct the member opposite. The restrictions on crossing the border were first introduced by Ottawa. A week later, America retaliated.

With regard to having these restrictions removed, one side has to move first, and it should be Canada. I suspect the U.S. might actually move first and force us to rescind the restrictions, because it makes no sense to have these restrictions on people who sit in their cab for 22 hours of the day by themselves. While they have been crossing the border all through the last two years, they were being called heroes, and now you call them racists and you call them separatists and you call them sexist people. This is wrong.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I just want to remind the member opposite that he is to speak through the Chair. Throughout his speech he kept saying "you" while looking at the government bench.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member has a point. Comments do need to come through the Chair.

[Translation]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Madam Speaker, in his speech, my colleague talked about the protest and the trucker convoy. That deteriorated. It was not necessarily just a trucker convoy anymore, with all of the flags being displayed in Ottawa. We definitely do not want the Emergencies Act to be used. We are wondering how far this act can go if invoked.

Given the enormity of what has happened in Ottawa and elsewhere, what does my colleague think? Is it excessive or not?

[English]

Mr. Corey Tochor: Madam Speaker, we have had protests in Canada for over 150 years. Every protest that I have seen was able to be stopped with the current laws on the books. We had massive protests in major cities across Canada, protests in which buildings were being burnt, cars were being set on fire and people were getting killed. For three weeks, we had none of that on the streets of Ottawa. It was the lack of leadership from the Prime Minister that facilitated this protest getting to the place that it got to.

I am against blockades. I am against any illegal activity. Canadians still have the right to protest. They still have the right to have their message heard. These measures are not needed, because in the history of our country we have been able to put down all protests that we have had in the past up until now. Why is that? I believe it is because this act is being used for political reasons, not for law and order, which I am a big believer in.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Madam Speaker, I believe we have a responsibility to reflect on how we have become so divided. Instead of peace, order and good government, we are witnessing chaos and disorder and poor government. Today our hon. member acknowledged the question of leadership.

My question is on behalf of the thousands of emails and phone calls I have received from people in my riding of Hastings—Lennox and Addington.

Does the hon. member agree that we need to stop this abuse of power and focus on our strengths and opportunities as a country?

• (1130)

Mr. Corey Tochor: Madam Speaker, we need healing. We need a leader who will listen, a leader who will not divide us for his own benefit. We need to come together like never before because of what we have been through in the last two years. We talk about the traumatic scenes that some people witnessed in Ottawa. They could not go to work, could not see loved ones and could not get around. Well, that is what our country has been like for the last two years.

We need a leader who will bring freedom back to Canada and remember “God keep our land glorious and free”.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always an honour to rise in this place to take part in debate, although I must say I am saddened that it is under the current circumstances. Last week, I put down my words very carefully on what my contribution to this debate would be, but last week is not this week. Today is not yesterday. I would ask, why are we still here? Why has the Prime Minister not revoked this massive overreach by his Liberal government? The streets are now clear and the trucks are gone, and as we have yet to vote on all this, all done without parliamentary approval, let us recap for a moment how we came to be here.

Trucking was not broken in Canada. For the past two years, truckers have successfully delivered the goods, so to speak. Where was the problem here? Why did the Prime Minister intentionally pick this fight? Why did he decide to fix a trucking problem that was not broken? Truckers did their job faithfully for two years without a mandate. The vast majority of truckers are fully vaccinated. A small number of truckers who drive truck alone in their cab were never at any time shown to be a public health risk. The Liberal government has produced zero evidence to suggest there is a risk, and now here we are.

We all know that the Prime Minister has poured fuel on the fire. I will not quote the nasty names he has used because I believe them to be unparliamentary. He has told the truckers that they hold “unacceptable views”, that they do not deserve to be heard, that they must be condemned. The Prime Minister succeeded. He drove peo-

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ple to come from all parts of Canada to Ottawa to protest largely against him and the actions of his government, and to send a message to him that they wanted to be heard. I believe all of Ottawa and indeed Canada heard their message. Some agree with that message. Others do not. That is what occurs in a democracy. We know when the Prime Minister sees a protest that he agrees with, he joins it. Now we know that when he sees a protest he does not agree with, he will use the most powerful law he has to silence it, because that is exactly what happened when he invoked the Emergencies Act.

I come from British Columbia. It is a beautiful province, but one where we have seen far more than our fair share of protests. As anyone from British Columbia will tell us, when the RCMP decides to move in and clear protests, they do so with surgical-like efficiency. Close to 900 protesters have been cleared from the Fairy Creek protests and arrested. In November, the RCMP moved in on and cleared a protest blockade against the Pacific LNG gas line. A remote region in rural British Columbia with many indigenous protesters was cleared by the RCMP in a single day. These are not observations; these are facts. Make no mistake. All of these protests were cleared under existing Canadian laws.

Let me ask this place a question. Can any of us name any protest that has occurred in Canada since 2015 that has not ended under existing Canadian laws? I do not believe any of us can because none exist. I was first elected to this place in 2011, and, indeed, during the majority years of that government, I lost track of how many protests occurred. Every single one was resolved under existing Canadian laws. Why does that matter? It is because the standard used to invoke the Emergencies Act is absolutely crystal clear. The Emergencies Act cannot be invoked unless the emergency “cannot be effectively dealt with under any other law of Canada”, full stop. However, the Prime Minister tried nothing else to de-escalate the situation before invoking the Emergencies Act.

That leaves a very awkward question on the table: Why is it that every other protest in modern-day Canadian history was cleared under existing laws and authority, but this protest required special laws, the Emergencies Act?

• (1135)

We all know, for whatever reason, that the Ottawa police were either unwilling or unable to do what other police forces in Canada have done. Also, let us not say it is due to the trucks. What Windsor police did in clearing the Ambassador Bridge only the week prior was done under existing laws, and it also involved trucks. Whatever the answer is to that question, make no mistake that an Ottawa policing problem is not a national crisis. We all know this.

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I remind the House that all of the measures within the Emergencies Act must be met before the act can be invoked. It is not some, nor one. All must be met. Some members may not like that the law sets the standard, and the government is free to amend the law and members can support that or not. However, as it stands, the law has not been amended. All standards must be met before it is invoked by a government.

Every protest in the past 20 years has been resolved under existing Canadian laws. It not 99% of them, but 100% of them. The Prime Minister knows this, as does his Minister of Public Safety. The Liberals therefore had to change tactics, using heated rhetoric and making serious claims, but without providing any data to back up those claims. This approach from the Prime Minister seems to be taken from the Adam Sutler character in the movie *V for Vendetta*: scare the people and use fear. That is what the Prime Minister is trying to do to justify what cannot be legally justified.

This past weekend we watched exactly what happened. There was no armed insurrection. There were no massive stockpiles of illegal weapons, explosives or incendiary devices found here in Ottawa. This protest was largely cleared in a single weekend much like every other protest is cleared in Canada: without using the Emergencies Act.

Why is this a different situation and why are we still here? Why is the Emergencies Act not being revoked? I am reminded that recently the member for Louis-Hébert gave a public statement. He knows the dangerous games the Prime Minister plays. This member had the courage to call out the Prime Minister's divisive tactics and politics of division.

Here is the problem with the politics of division. Politically, I suppose some would say that if we poll on an issue, pick a winning side and then demonize the losing side, we come away with more votes. The challenge with this approach is that when we create sides, we divide people and create winners and losers. That approach divides. It creates hate and animosity.

Indeed, we have heard the Prime Minister use nasty words against those who, with his policies, have been turned into losers. We heard the Prime Minister make a most ungraceful and undignified attack against a female MP from my party last week. Why would he do that? Is it really too much of an expectation that a leader of a G7 country cannot answer a question from a Jewish member of Parliament without suggesting she stands with people who wave swastikas? However, he refused to apologize. He refused three times. Even after a day of reflection, he still refused to apologize, but that is what this man has become since the election: bitter, angry, divisive and vindictive. I say vindictive because we are still here. The protests have been cleared. The only motive now to continue with the act would be to punish, to punish under the terms of the Emergencies Act, where there is no due process to protect the innocent from mistakes that may occur. Is this the Canada we want now, one that punishes people without fairness and without due process?

Let us also recognize that other countries are now openly mocking and belittling the actions of the Prime Minister. How will future Canadian governments condemn those nations for cracking down on their citizens when we are no better here? Canada used to be an

example, a country known for its kindness to others, its compassion and its willingness to stand with others to fight against tyranny and oppression. Today, under the Prime Minister, we have become a nation increasingly divided whose citizens are fighting among themselves. There was a time in the past when the Prime Minister would apologize for his use of unparliamentary words in this place and would speak of sunny ways, but not anymore. We have gone from sunny ways to dark days.

What has become of the Prime Minister since the election? The comments directed by the Prime Minister to the member for Thornhill were abhorrent. We cannot allow division to continue. If members vote for this act knowing full well that not all the conditions have been met, and knowing the protests have been cleared and the trucks are gone, they are basically authorizing an overuse and abuse and setting a very dangerous precedent in this process. They will in fact lower the bar that needs to be set high. We must do our job as parliamentarians, which means we must follow the law. If we do not, we are failing Canadians.

• (1140)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will quote something from the Winnipeg Free Press that was printed just the other day. "Premier Heather Stefanson pleaded in a private letter to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau—"

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member cannot use a member's name.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I am sorry. I definitely know better.

The article states:

Premier Heather Stefanson pleaded in a private letter to [the] Prime Minister...to intervene at the Emerson border blockade just days before she publicly opposed his decision to enact the federal Emergencies Act against protesters.

In a Feb. 11 letter obtained by the Free Press, Stefanson asked [the Prime Minister] to take "immediate and effective" action as she pleaded for "national leadership that only you and the federal government can provide."

The Province of Alberta asked for Ottawa to help and to bring in some tow trucks. The Premier of Ontario supports this initiative. The interim Ottawa police chief supports it. It seems to me that it is the extreme Conservative right that is playing politics, and there is ample evidence of hypocrisy.

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Speaker, in my speech I said very clearly that there are laws within Canada that allow for the coordination of police and for establishing order without invoking the Emergencies Act. It has never been used before. The member is just wrong. No one has said that any of the massive protests outside of this place could not have been dealt with using existing laws.

Now I will quote the Prime Minister:

...in order for you to trust your government, you need a government that will trust you. When we make a mistake—as all governments do—it is important that we acknowledge that mistake and learn from it. We know that you do not expect us to be perfect—but you expect us to work tirelessly, and to be honest, open, and sincere in our efforts to serve the public interest.

What happened to that Prime Minister?

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am sick of hearing the Liberals tell us that this is an ordinary law that will simply provide a few extra tools if needed and that the provinces begged them to help and to show leadership. We, too, begged them to show some leadership for more than 20 days.

Showing leadership does not involve the use of an extreme piece of legislation like the Emergencies Act. It involves bringing people together, talking to them, trying to meet with them, coordinating law enforcement and taking action before 20 days have passed. What does my colleague think about that?

[English]

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Speaker, leadership is everything. Stoking divisions and name-calling, as the Prime Minister has done, and I will not use his unparliamentary terms, have escalated the crisis much more. He could have chosen to work with the solicitor general of Ontario to find ways to support utilizing existing measures, not the Emergencies Act.

It is the equivalent of awakening the kraken, a legislative leviathan that should only be broken when in the most dire situations. I do not believe the government has met the test, and in fact, I believe it should rescind that invocation immediately. We are a nation of laws, but no one person should have such power. Parliamentarians need to do our part to uphold the rule of law. If the government has not met the high threshold test, we should vote against it.

• (1145)

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, history has taught us that giving any government or politician too much power or too much money leads to a dictatorship style of governance. How much does this motion and this experience remind us of history?

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Speaker, I understand that when people are pushed to the limit, they want to push back. We are supposed to channel the concerns of Canadians to this place, and as I said, if the government felt that the threshold was too high in the Emergencies Act, it could have moved to amend it, but it did not.

We here in this chamber now have a responsibility to look at whether the Prime Minister and his cabinet have met the threshold to utilize legislation that gives them enormous powers that have never been used. We should limit those powers and the government

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should revoke its use of the act. In the face of not doing that, we should vote against this motion to restore—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Lethbridge.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, violence was their mode of operation; hate is what drove them; human life was called into question or altogether threatened; millions of dollars of damage was done to property, yet there was silence from the Prime Minister, and the media only spoke whispers several days later.

Meanwhile, 4,500 kilometres away on the other side of the country, a diverse group of Canadians gathered from all across. Some wore turbans and some wore toques. Some were in their seventies and some were not even able to walk yet. They gathered for one reason: to advocate for freedom. They gathered to advocate for what it is to be Canadian: true north, strong and free. These individuals were truckers, farmers, doctors, nurses, stay-at-home moms, students, teachers or social workers. I talked with them. I heard their story. I listened, because that is what a politician does who deeply cares about this country.

The Prime Minister took a bit of a different approach. He stigmatized. He antagonized. He turned a deaf ear. Some of these individuals drove big rigs; some of them drove Civics and some of them drove F-150s. Some of them were vaccinated three times and some of them were not vaccinated at all. However, they all were Canadians fighting for an ideal. Were they disruptive at times? Yes, indeed. That is the point of a peaceful assembly protesting something that people disagree with. It is allowed in this country, a democratic country. Were there a few bad actors? Sure there were, but they were quickly condemned and removed.

When we juxtapose this with the attack on the Coastal GasLink site at Houston, B.C., with damage to property and threat to human life, it becomes very clear that the Prime Minister's decision to invoke the Emergencies Act in response to Ottawa is a massive overreach and purely punitive in nature. We know this, especially given the fact that we watched the border crossings at Windsor, Coutts, Surrey and Emerson be cleared without the Emergencies Act needing to be invoked. We know it even more today, when we see that the downtown core of Ottawa has been cleared out.

However, the Prime Minister insists that he will still move forward with invoking the Emergencies Act. Why? Is it necessary? I argue it is not. Again, if the Windsor border, the Surrey border, the Coutts border and the Emerson border were able to be cleared up without this over-exaggeration of power, then Ottawa could have been too.

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There is something more that needs to be discussed here and that is what that threshold is for invoking the act. The Emergencies Act has never been used since it was first created in 1988. Its predecessor, the War Measures Act, was used three times: once in World War I, once in World War II and once for the FLQ crisis, where again, human life was taken and the country was really thrown into chaos. The bar is high, so for the Prime Minister to invoke the Emergencies Act when an assembly of people comes to protest with views that are different from his, one has to wonder why; why the overreach?

The one power the Prime Minister gets from this is the ability to freeze bank accounts. He has the opportunity to seize control of the monetary flow for those individuals who hold views different from his own. This is an abuse of power. We are talking about individuals who may have donated \$10 or maybe a few hundred dollars to this cause. Simply because they had views that were different from the Prime Minister's, their bank accounts are frozen and they are unable to make their car payments, their house payments or put food on the table. Some of them are unable to take care of their children. Others are unable just to meet the basic needs of life.

It is a massive breach on these individuals, and it is simply for no other reason than the fact that these folks failed to fall in line. They questioned the government and they hold views that are different from the Prime Minister's. Using the tactic of a schoolyard bully, he has decided to implement the Emergencies Act so that he can control, manipulate, dictate, be punitive and punish.

● (1150)

It should be highlighted that the federal government is utilizing national security tools that were designed to combat terrorism against Canadians who support protests. We must let that sink in for just a moment. The Prime Minister of our country is using laws that are normally used against terrorists, and he is using them against citizens of his own country who hold views that happen to be different from his own. That is extremely alarming. It is vindictive. One commentator said, "It's almost as if the cruelty is the point."

It did not need to come to this. The reason we are here is that the Prime Minister decided to put a punitive measure in place. On January 15, he required that all truck drivers going across the U.S. border and wanting to return to Canada needed to be double-vaccinated. We are talking about individuals who were earlier declared as heroes, individuals who stayed in the cabs of their truck, aside from maybe refuelling or grabbing a quick snack at a gas station. These individuals have served our country in an incredibly heroic way, and then the Prime Minister made a decision to go after them and put restrictions in place. It was nonsense.

This started a movement of hundreds of thousands of Canadians who started to question the government, question the Prime Minister, question his motives, and fair enough, as they did not add up. Dr. Tam herself was saying that we needed to reassess the mandates that were put in place at that time. She herself was saying that we needed to learn to live with COVID, that we needed to return to normal.

The Prime Minister has turned a deaf ear, a blind eye and has refused to listen. I am not sure what his agenda is, but it certainly is

not to serve this country well. It certainly is not in the best interests of Canadians at heart.

Before even knowing who was coming to Ottawa, he refused to listen. His tactics were mean-spirited and divisive in nature. He stigmatized. He antagonized. He traumatized. He went after these individuals telling them they were a fringe minority with unacceptable views. He damaged the unity of this country, pitting one region or one people against another. He crushed the human spirit.

One of my constituents wrote to me. She is an immigrant who moved to Canada about a decade ago. She now has three children and is married. She runs a small business and is a beautiful community participant.

She wrote:

It was mere months ago I filled out the paperwork to become a Canadian citizen. I desire to align myself with a nation I've come to love, to stand beside people who make it great, to cast a vote in the bucket of democracy. And yet, I am sickened by the increasingly pervasive narrative being spouted; one where rightness trumps charity...and good faith, and where 'being Canadian' is defined not by our humanity but by our political affiliations.

And here I am, awaiting news of my application status, while the Canada I thought I knew crumbles around me, not from Covid-but from the divisive and destructive language being used to define citizenship and belonging.

Further on she wrote:

But what am I saying yes to? A nation that speaks before listening, one that defines 'being a good Canadian' in a way that marginalizes everyone who doesn't fit said description.

She concluded by writing:

I humbly ask that we take steps towards the Canada I first moved to-one where value isn't gained its given-and given generously by the people who call it home. Because diversity of thought and conscience are greater markers of democracy than the alternative.

This is the deep, hard cry of so many Canadians across this country. We want a unified nation. We want a prime minister who listens to the fellow citizens of this great country. We want to move forward with strength. The Prime Minister has claimed that he wants the same, but in order to do that, it starts with him. He must trust and respect the Canadian people for the Canadian people to do the same. Unfortunately, he has chosen gamesmanship over statesmanship, and it is killing our country.

I urge this House to vote no to the punitive measures that are being discussed here today.

● (1155)

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I think we can all agree that many of the protesters who came to Ottawa and other parts of the country felt they were speaking out against the suffering that many Canadians have felt over the past two years and that the restrictions for them were difficult and challenging. This pandemic has been difficult and challenging for all Canadians.

I want to ask the member why colleagues across the way choose to be wilfully blind to the white supremacy sentiments that were clear and present in the leadership of this convoy, be it Pat King's vitriol, Tamara Lich's affiliation with the Maverick Party, the Diagonel badges that were found on the members who were arrested at Coutts, or the 1,100 donors discovered through GoFundMe who had also donated to the Capitol riots of January 6, 2021, in the United States. I would be happy to share the ADL report with her if she would like.

I feel strongly that all of us should be standing up against white supremacists and anti-democratic sentiments, whether they are forthcoming and up front in these blockades or part of the driving forces that led people to gather together.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Speaker, interestingly enough, the member knows very well that my party, the members on our side of the aisle, have condemned those acts of hate or the flying of swastikas, but she chooses to participate in the same tactics as the Prime Minister, which is to divide, attack and be punitive. It is absolutely disgusting.

What we are talking about right now is invoking the Emergencies Act in the country of Canada, an act the Prime Minister will use in order to go after individuals who disagree with his viewpoints.

Why does the member not ask the Prime Minister to apologize to the member on our side, who was accused of marching with a swastika, when she herself is a young Jewish woman? That is disgusting. I would urge the member to call out the Prime Minister on that bad behaviour.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, in the comments made by the member for Lethbridge, alongside others, I appreciated the call for unity, particularly in a discussion in this House that has been lacking that in recent days. What is important in that is also a shared understanding of facts and context.

I also note that in the member's comments there was no mention of the MOU to overthrow the government or the ties to white nationalism as part of the ideologies of the protesters who were in Ottawa. I wonder if the member would want to share more about the wider context of those who were in Ottawa over recent weeks.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Speaker, I wonder if the member opposite would like to talk about the vast majority of protesters who held themselves in peaceful regard, such as elderly individuals and those in their twenties, the children who bounced in bouncy castles and waved Canadian flags, the people who cooked sausages and pancakes and held little rallies, and those who advocated for their freedom, which is their democratic right to do.

I wonder if that same member, after talking about all of those peaceful protesting acts that were taken here on Parliament Hill by the vast majority of participants, would then also like to talk about the fact that the Prime Minister is invoking the Emergencies Act—

• (1200)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Montcalm.

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[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, not only do the orders not meet the criteria set out in section 3 of the Emergencies Act, but, to hear the arguments from our Liberal colleagues, we really get the impression that they are turning the ultimate tool at the government's disposal into a public interest law.

Does my colleague not find that this trivializes the act?

[English]

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Speaker, as discussed in my speech, I believe that the Prime Minister is overstepping and that this is a massive overreach and abuse of power. Something that should be used against terrorists he is using against the citizens who have protested him in the streets of Ottawa because they hold viewpoints that are different from his. It is absolutely—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Edmonton Manning.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, let me begin by wishing all Canadians a happy family day. Today is supposed to be a day for Canadian families to celebrate and enjoy being a family, with all the peace and prosperity that they deserve. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister chooses to be the sole architect of this crisis, which we have been talking about for the last few days.

We stand at a crossroads in the House today. It is by this motion, and no other, that this Parliament, and the men and women in the House of Commons today, will be remembered. During the First World War, Canadians saw the War Measures Act imposed for the first time. Under that act, more than 8,500 men, women and children of Ukrainian background were interned in 24 camps across the country. Many of them had been born in Canada.

Their rights, including the right to vote, were ignored by the government of the day, and Parliament and the people of Canada remained silent to those injustices. It was only in 2005, with the passage of the Internment of Persons of Ukrainian Origin Recognition Act, that some redress was made to the descendants of those who were abused by the government, acknowledging that what was done was wrong.

In early 1942, the government of Canada used the War Measures Act to intern more than 21,000 Japanese Canadians. They were held for the duration of the Second World War. Their homes and businesses were seized and sold to pay for the detention. Once again, Parliament and the people of Canada remained silent about the mistreatment of citizens. It was only in 1988 that the then prime minister Brian Mulroney apologized for this wrongful act by the Canadian government.

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The last time the War Measures Act was used was during the October Crisis of 1970. The government of the day imposed it because of a perceived insurrection, which turned out to be much less of an insurrection than the government had imagined. Hundreds of Quebecers were ousted from their beds in the middle of the night and held without a trial, only to eventually be released without apology. Their supposed crime had been to show support for an unpopular idea, which was Quebec's independence. The government of the day lumped them together with those who had committed the crimes, unable to separate the difference between beliefs and actions.

If that sounds much like what has happened in Canada over the past few weeks, that is because it is. The government does not seem able to grasp that it is possible to disagree with a policy and to protest against that policy without being dangerous to society, so it invoked the Emergencies Act. As former NDP leader Tommy Douglas famously remarked in 1970, it is like “using a sledgehammer to crack a peanut”. The government has failed to prove any justification for this action. In effect, it is using the most draconian piece of legislation at its disposal to fix a parking problem in downtown Ottawa.

Members of the government ask us to trust them on this matter. They tell us that their actions will remain consistent with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. They tell us that there are no plans to call in the army.

Pardon me for looking at the government's track record and taking those statements with a huge grain of salt. I am sure government members are sincere and believe what they are saying. Unfortunately, as we have seen, their actions are frequently quite different from the high ideals of their words, and it is by their actions that they will be judged, not by their flowery language.

• (1205)

I would challenge any member from the government side to explain how freezing the bank accounts, without a warrant, of persons who have not been charged with a crime is consistent with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Does the action apply only to those who have illegally parked their vehicles in downtown Ottawa? What about their families? Does it extend to those who have liked the “freedom convoy” on Facebook? How far will the Prime Minister go to silence those who disagree with his policies? We should just watch him.

We have all heard stories about the government's no-fly list, which prevents thousands of people with alleged terrorist connections from air travel. We all agree that such a list had a purpose. However, that list of names is just that. It does not include passport numbers, dates of birth or other information to better identify those who may not fly. That means we regularly hear of those who are banned from air travel because their names are on the list, but they are not the ones who are targeted. A five-year-old child with the same name as a terrorist had no redress when turned away at the airport.

Forgive me for wondering how we can trust the government to freeze the bank accounts of only those who have taken part in the Ottawa protest. It would be simple to arrest those on the scene. Instead, it is making it more complicated, and it is sure to make mis-

takes. Telling Canadians that the government respects the Charter of Rights will be cold comfort when it makes those mistakes and starts seizing the bank accounts of people who have no connection to the protests. Canadian citizens who have done nothing wrong will have the government seizing their assets, and they will have no redress.

Government members will tell us that this could not happen. I ask members to remember the no-fly list and ask themselves if they believe it.

Over the past week, I have received hundreds of phone calls, as I am sure is the case for every member in the House, not just from constituents, but also from other concerned Canadians. Some are angry at the state of our country. They do not understand why the federal government is not following the science in bringing an end to various mandates. They demand action.

Many more, though, are afraid. They are afraid of the direction they see Canada taking. They see division in the House of Commons and in the country. Many blame the Prime Minister for creating those divisions. Others blame politicians.

One woman I spoke with, a senior citizen, was in tears. She loves Canada. She is horrified at what we are becoming. After two years of the pandemic, she feels helpless. She is looking to Parliament to show leadership, and what she sees is a government attempting to divide Canadians instead of unifying them, a government that denies the right to peaceful protest for anyone who disagrees with its policies, a prime minister who is too afraid of others' viewpoints to even meet with them on Zoom.

I encourage all hon. members, as we cast our vote today, to consider their place in history, remember the abuses by governments past and ask ourselves if the situation at hand warrants the method being used by the government. Let us put aside our different political party identities and come together to vote as Canadians.

The nation is watching us now. Will we pretend that we are living in 1917, 1942 or 1970, or will we show that we understand that, in 2022, Canadians must not be abused on a whim of a prime minister? History will remember our actions.

• (1210)

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to address the question the member just asked: Will we continue to pretend that we are living in the past?

It seems that the member opposite and his Conservative colleagues are, in fact, living in the past as they continually reference the War Measures Act and comments Tommy Douglas made about that act in 1970. We are here to debate a very different act, the Emergencies Act, which was introduced, in fact, to address the very concerns the member raised with the War Measures Act and, may I remind the member opposite, by a Conservative government.

Why do the member opposite and his colleagues continually reference an act that is no longer on the books in Canada? They are creating confusion, anxiety and concern among people, when we really should be focused on the act we are debating today, which is the Emergencies Act.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Madam Speaker, the hon. member can call it by whatever name, at the end of the day, the action and the effect of it is what will be remembered by Canadians for generations to come. Let us not divide on this issue of the name, as the Prime Minister, her boss, has been doing in dividing Canadians for the last years, and we have seen the outcome of that right now. That is my answer. I hope that hon. member will be able to stand on the right side of history and vote against this draconian bill.

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech, which I found to be very interesting at times. Obviously, for different reasons, the Bloc Québécois is also against the application of the Emergencies Act, which we have been debating since Thursday, but that is not exactly the issue I wanted to address with my colleague.

As my other colleague said in her question, he mentioned the War Measures Act several times. He talked about moments in history when this legislation was invoked for different reasons. Obviously, this did not fall on deaf ears. I heard his commentary on the sad events that happened in Quebec in 1970. He also noted that many Quebecers were unjustly arrested, sometimes while in bed, in the middle of the night, for no reason, and were arbitrarily detained, often for several weeks.

If the Bloc Québécois moved another motion calling on the government to apologize to those Quebecers who were victims of the War Measures Act in 1970, would my colleague approve our motion this time?

[English]

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Madam Speaker, I can see that the Bloc Québécois and Quebecers remember that dark chapter when people were arrested without any link and victims were lumped together with criminals. At that time, what was done was unnecessary and it was done on an imaginary basis. I will support an apology to Quebec and Quebecers, because I believe that chapter of our history has to be turned forever.

• (1215)

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my friend for Edmonton Manning for an excellent speech.

I took note particularly of a comment the member made about following the science and this Prime Minister's refusal to follow the science when it does not fit his narrative.

I am wondering what message my colleague would give to NDP members who have always been champions of civil liberties and who are now seeing the liberties of Canadians trampled under foot. What would he say to the NDP about voting with their conscience and about remaining true to the values that they say are important?

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Madam Speaker, yesterday, I was listening to a speech of an NDP member who was talking about the far right and the far left. I will call members of the NDP today the far lost.

Statutory Order

They are lost and do not remember their history. Quebec is remembering the history, but the members of the NDP are not. I would call on those members to vote no today just to be on the right side of history.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before I go to debate, a little while ago somebody yelled out "time". When people yell out while other people have the floor, it is not proper. First of all, the timing is up to the Speaker. It is not up to members within the chamber. As well, I do have a clock in front of me. I am very conscious of the time, and I think I have been very fair. I ask those members who feel I have not been to approach me so I can address it.

Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development.

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Calgary Skyview.

I have listened intently to the debate that has taken place in the House now for several days, and I come today with my intervention as a legislator, as a member of my community and as a mother.

Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl once said, "Freedom is in danger of degenerating into mere arbitrariness unless it is lived in terms of responsibility." The protection of our democratic institutions and the fabric of this country require for us to be responsible in this moment.

We can all agree that we came to this House to represent our communities and their rights under the Charter, which include the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and protest, and the right to be safe and secure in our homes and places of worship. These democratic freedoms that we cherish and enjoy as Canadians are exercised and anchored within the rule of law.

As a mother and member of my community, I know we are exhausted and frustrated by the devastating impacts of the pandemic. Many of us have experienced trauma, and others are grieving the loss of a loved one among the over 34,000 Canadians who have died due to COVID-19.

We can agree that the majority of Canadians, communities, families, mothers and fathers, health care workers, essential service workers and business owners, have come together and have been unified to support one another, to take care of each other these past two years, day after day, in the simplest of ways. They have done this by wearing masks, by maintaining health protocols and social distancing, and, yes, by getting vaccinated, including 90% of Canadian truckers.

Statutory Order

All the tools that we as federal, provincial and municipal governments have utilized have been with only one primary goal in mind: to keep one another safe and healthy in this unprecedented global pandemic and to be united in a fight for the collective health and safety of one another and of our most vulnerable, the immunocompromised and the elderly.

We have come to agree that the convoy of people who came to Ottawa unimpeded to speak their minds over the duration of three weeks of occupation became an illegal blockade. It included members who intimidated residents, threatening their safety and security. Its leaders called for the overthrowing of this government and its replacement with leaders of their choosing, and they are affiliated with disturbing alliances to white supremacy, racism and, yes, anti-Semitism.

We can agree that Canadians were shocked, horrified and traumatized to see the memory and tragedy of the Holocaust diminished and weaponized to justify this insurrection, be it through yellow stars worn on coats or, as Canadians were pained to see, white supremacy flags brazenly flown with Confederate or Nazi flags by some in the crowd. The language of organizers in their social media feeds spouted hate and vitriol, demanding a removal of government time and again, and let us not forget that the tragedy of residential schools was trivialized to justify these illegal protests.

We can agree that all of these acts harm the fabric of our democracy, our governmental institutions and our unity. They also harm the trust we have in one another as Canadians.

We have been asked if the threshold was met to invoke the Emergencies Act. The test to justify this difficult decision is that there has to be a threat that is national in scope and that current tools are unable to address. We can acknowledge that the arrival of hundreds of truckers at each location across the country, blocking critical infrastructure, is a harm and a threat, be it to the borders themselves, impacting jobs and the livelihood of families, or in the form of the hundreds of millions of dollars of our economic trade that were impacted. It was a harm and a threat, on a more personal level, to the mother I spoke to, whose autistic child had to be taken to the emergency room due to the incessant honking of horns that were causing him to self-harm, or to the man, on one of the first nights of the occupation of Ottawa, who died in an ambulance because it could not get through.

We can agree that a degree of foreign funds, nearly 50% of the millions raised, was fuelled not by the desire to protest vaccine mandates but by a desire to drive white supremacist populist agendas that are a threat to our democratic institutions, and was potentially donated by foreign agents, political movements and individuals from beyond our borders. We must address this.

We can agree that the pervasiveness of these blockades has been national in scope, impacting borders and communities from across the country. These were not peaceful protests. This is clear by the weapons seized at the Alberta Coutts border and the 12 arrests of those charged with conspiracy to commit murder.

We have been asked if this is a first, second, third or last resort. If we are to examine the engagement and timelines of the very public sharing of information as this situation unfolded, we can agree on

the following: Municipal and provincial jurisdictions were offered assistance and tools by this government on the first day these illegal blockades took hold. The government was clear in its regular and daily communication with local authorities on the resources it could provide if asked to do so.

● (1220)

What colleagues can and should understand is that as the federal government, we continued to do the work that our jurisdiction and authority allowed us to do. That is how we protected and respected the Constitution, the charter and the authority of all levels of government as a democracy, working together to evaluate capacity each and every step of the way during the illegal blockades.

The occupation of downtown Ottawa and the Windsor and Coutts borders posed a unique threat by the tactics used, be it the trucks themselves, the lethal weapons found or the tremendous economic impact.

Finally, I say this both as a legislator and as a mother, the horrifying images of the children who were put in harm's way time and again in the name of protest, who were sent as human shields, required this Emergencies Act to be implemented. We have an obligation to our constituents, our businesses, our communities, our families and yes, our children, to protect them from such harms.

To that end, in order to continue to build on these efforts, the federal government made the responsible and reasonable decision to ensure that this situation could be brought under control so Canadians could get their lives back.

We know that these tools were necessary. We know this from the interim chief of police for Ottawa, Steve Bell, who said so clearly in his statement last Friday: "With the new resources we've seen flowing in from our policing partners, the new tools both the province and federal government have put in place, and our new integrated command centre...I believe we now have the resources and partners to bring a safe end to this occupation." They have done that, and they will continue to do so.

Without this act, law enforcement from Vancouver, Sudbury, Toronto, Halton, York Region, Quebec and many other jurisdictions, including the OPP and the RCMP, could not have been mobilized in this manner to answer the call of Ottawa police for 1,800 officers to assist on the ground. We thank each and every one of them for their service and their swift action. It was professional, strategic and measured, and kept the peace while dismantling the illegal blockades and removing protesters, restoring the city of Ottawa back to its rightful residents.

This is a defining moment for law and order and for democracy to be upheld. It was not taken lightly, and the measures we have proposed are temporary, strategic and necessary to ensure that all levels of government and law enforcement from across Canada can work together for Canadians. There will be much discussion, inquiry and review of the implementation of these measures in the coming months, as there should be, for this is an unprecedented decision and a responsible, reasonable one.

It will also be a time of deep reflection on where we are as a country when white supremacy, populism and anti-Semitic, racist and anti-democratic action can rise so swiftly among protesters and mobilize others under a banner of freedom that was anything but.

● (1225)

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister, the only Liberal member who has the right to speak freely, just turned what should have been a vote of conscience into a vote of confidence.

We can see from our discussions with the Liberal members that many of them are uncomfortable with these extreme measures now that the truckers are gone. Could my colleague set aside what she thinks and the speech she just gave and tell us how she feels about the fact that the Liberal members are not being allowed to vote according to their conscience on such a historic matter? Does that make her uncomfortable?

[English]

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: Madam Speaker, as the member knows, each and every one of us will vote. How we choose to vote and what we decide at that moment are based on the serious moment we are in as a country as we represent our communities, our families, our businesses and our constituents. I encourage the member to think deeply and wisely, as all of us in the House will do, on how we choose to vote on this important Emergencies Act today.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, last week in the House of Commons, the Prime Minister made deplorable comments, accusing the member for Thornhill of standing with those with swastikas. Those comments were rightfully called out by the member's predecessor, Michael Levitt, a well respected member of the House of Commons who never resorted to the kind of partisan approach that we have seen from the Prime Minister or even, at times, from this member. Michael Levitt said on Twitter that it is disappointing to see the swastika politicized in the House of Commons or anywhere else.

Is the member willing to stand with Michael Levitt and recognize that the Prime Minister's comments last week to the member for Thornhill were inappropriate?

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: Madam Speaker, it is this Prime Minister and this government that have been prepared to take a hard and uncomfortable look at the history of racism and exclusion in this country. Be it the firm commitment to the path of reconciliation with first nations, the apology to the Italian community for the internment of its members in World War II, or the apology to the Jewish community and to the passengers of the *St. Louis*, we must remind all Canadians that when we divide and when we say "none is too many", the consequences are tragic.

Statutory Order

These are our uncomfortable truths. I would invite the member and his colleagues to get uncomfortable and do the work, the collective and judicious work, of recognizing that conveniently dismissing a few bad apples or ignoring the disturbing white supremacy and racism that was in front of all Canadians and at the root of the leadership of these illegal blockades, are something that needs to be addressed and explained to all Canadians.

One Nazi flag, one Confederate flag and one gun is too many.

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was really moved by the answer the member just gave. We have been continuously hearing from the opposition today that this is a peaceful protest, that the protesters all meant well, and that the protesters were just having a carnival here for the last three weeks. It is continuing to minimize the seriousness of what is really going on.

I would like the member to elaborate on why we cannot overlook the signs that were out there.

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: Madam Speaker, throughout these three weeks, with the leadership and the organizers, we have to look at the root to understand the cause. We can look at Pat King, Tamara Lich or other members of the leadership who spoke, and we see the history of their language on social media, of the racist, white supremacist, anti-democratic statements they have made time and again. They rallied those around them, people from a different cause, who were tired, like many, from this pandemic, and used and weaponized them for something that is much deeper and darker.

We need to address that in this country. The weapons found at Coutts show it. The badges show it. We will continue to stand up against it and speak out against it in the House and in this country.

● (1230)

Mr. George Chahal (Calgary Skyview, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House today. This evening I will be voting in favour of confirming the invocation of the Emergencies Act to restore peace, order and good government.

We are country of the rule of law, protected by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I have heard a clear and urgent plea from my constituents and Calgarians alike. They want illegal and disruptive protests to come to an end. The actions of a small group of protesters have impacted working truckers, business owners and thousands of law-abiding residents.

Statutory Order

We are making significant progress towards recovery from the pandemic. Unfortunately, the actions of a few have taken us in the wrong direction, away from freedom and towards disorder. Local authorities in both Alberta and Ontario were unable to restore order for weeks. They allowed protesters to cause massive economic damage, with border blockades alone disrupting millions of dollars in trade.

Last week, at our transportation infrastructure committee meeting, the impacts of that trade were highlighted. At Coutts, for 18 days, they were \$48 million a day, for a total of \$864 million in trade lost or deferred. At the Ambassador Bridge, for six days, there was \$2.4-billion worth of impact to our economy. If we look at the impact on the Pacific Highway or at Emerson, there was a substantial cost to our economy, coast to coast. It was billions of dollars.

Then we should think about the people impacted: the small businesses whose goods and services have not come because of these blockades. Many small businesses in Calgary are saying it will take weeks or months to get the supply chain back to a normal working order, impacting their businesses' ability to open and provide goods and services to Calgarians and Canadians.

I have had the opportunity to speak to many truckers during this time. One of my constituents, Kabir, who lives in Calgary Skyview, was caught in the blockade at Coutts. He could not get back into the country. He could not pass that blockade. This had a tremendous impact on him. He was not able to deliver those goods and services, and make those deliveries of groceries and medical supplies, like many of his colleagues were doing in the province of Alberta. It also took him away from getting back home to his family after being away for 10 days. It disrupted his future job opportunities to deliver to other parts of the country and back into the U.S. That is one of the truckers from my constituency, and there are many more who have been impacted by these illegal disruptions.

My thoughts go out to the family who was on their way home to Medicine Hat to visit to their loved one. Their mother was ill and unfortunately passed away. Because of the blockade at Coutts, they were unable to make it home to see their loved one one last time. This had an impact on me. The impacts of these illegal blockades were financial, but they also had a cost to the lives and families of many.

On the Coutts border specifically, law enforcement agencies initially chose to negotiate and de-escalate the situation until they were faced with radicalized and heavily armed extremists, who were soon charged with conspiracy to commit murder. The police found guns, ammunition, body armour, and a threat to attack our law enforcement authorities.

These events underscored the urgency of action. Invoking the Emergencies Act had an immediate, positive effect on restoring order. Law enforcement agencies from across the country were mobilized and have restored order to Canada's capital.

• (1235)

Border blockades have been dismantled, allowing vehicles to move freely and maintain critical supply chains. Protest organizers have been arrested. It is also apparent that alt-right organizations participated in organizing these protest movements. These are

forces that promote conspiracy theories and disinformation to radicalize individuals. Some of these radicalized individuals have shown up at my private residence to intimidate me and my family.

Our government is not taking this decision lightly. It has been debated intensely by elected members of Parliament in the House of Commons. Its impact will be reviewed closely by a parliamentary committee explicitly tasked with studying all aspects of this situation. Checks and balances are in place to ensure accountability.

I want to express my disagreement with Alberta Premier Jason Kenney's decision to challenge the federal use of the Emergencies Act. On February 5, Alberta's minister of municipal affairs sent a letter to Canada's Minister of Public Safety requesting federal assistance in removing obstructions from a provincial highway. Our government listened, and responded by including a provision in the Emergencies Act that orders tow truck drivers to move vehicles that are blocking roads. It is unfortunate that the premier continues to meaninglessly posture instead of putting the best interests of his province above his own political survival.

Our nation's capital was under occupation for more than three weeks. Non-state foreign actors have been actively engaged in undermining our democratic institutions. Canada was unprepared. I look forward to the continued vigorous debate in Parliament to investigate and hold responsible those who have caused direct and indirect damage to our security and to our economic interests.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is disheartening to see my NDP colleagues in the House support the gross overreach of the government that would weaponize these kinds of measures against them ideologically in the future.

Will the member opposite commit to making all documents, every single one of them related to the emergency declaration and its use, publicly available today in the House as part of a mandatory inquiry? I would like just a yes or no.

Mr. George Chahal: Madam Speaker, there will be a parliamentary committee set up to discuss this and thoroughly review all impacts of this act in the days and weeks ahead. I look forward to working with the hon. member and having a good discussion on how to make sure that in the future we can work together to ensure good support for Canadians from coast to coast.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

The Bloc Québécois's position has been very clear from the start. We are against the use of the Emergencies Act. We believe that leadership was enough to resolve the problem and the situation in many places in Canada. That proved that this law is not necessary. The Bloc Québécois is against the use of this legislation, and the Quebec National Assembly voted unanimously against it. We are therefore very comfortable with our position.

I would like to ask the only Liberal member from Alberta a question.

Does he not feel a little embarrassed to go against the Premier of Alberta's position?

• (1240)

[English]

Mr. George Chahal: Madam Speaker, it is important that we work together with municipal jurisdictions and provinces across Canada when we deal with national emergencies. No, I do not agree with the actions Premier Kenney has taken. He asked for help and support, we provided it and for political reasons he is now looking to resort to other measures to keep his base in the province and to play politics. It is very unfortunate that he is doing that.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Ambassador Bridge is open right now. A private American billionaire owns that, however now the blockade is along the entire corridor. Under the Emergencies Act right now, it is being protected by municipal forces somewhat, but also by OPP and RCMP. Without that, it would be left to municipal resources alone.

I am wondering this. Does the member feel that is fair? If we do not have those types of supports, then there is a threat to the rest of Ontario and Quebec. For that corridor of 10,000 trucks a day to be susceptible and only be protected by municipal forces right now would be absurd.

Mr. George Chahal: Madam Speaker, the member is right. This is a concern that municipal and provincial jurisdictions did not have the capacity to take action. Municipal governments, for 18 days at Coutts and six on the Ambassador Bridge, just did not have the resources to act, and that is why our government stepped up. It is about the actions that could transpire in Windsor and also impact the province of Quebec and other parts of Ontario. We need to support local municipalities and provinces, as asked and where needed.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I wanted my colleague's comments on the weaponization of motor vehicles as, in effect, they are perfect instruments to intimidate citizens and the public. They are huge, people can sleep in them, they can get supplies and they can be eaten in. In fact, the police were afraid of what might be in those trailers, and it was not until the Emergencies Act was placed on the Order Paper that the police were able to get the resources and have the ability to end the blockade, which went from the Supreme Court of Canada all the way to—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I have to interrupt, because we are running out of time. I did ask for a quick question. I am sure the member for Calgary Skyview can give me a quick answer. That would be great.

Statutory Order

Mr. George Chahal: Madam Speaker, we have seen the weapons that were found at Coutts. There were guns, ammunition and body armour, and these large vehicles could be used for further destructive damage. They could quite easily be used to ram through barriers and could also be used in other manners as well, so I am concerned about the vehicles on the streets of residential neighbourhoods in Ottawa and in other parts of the country.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I find it absolutely tragic, the irony that is coming from the member who has been—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): That is not a point of order, and the hon. member has been reprimanded for this before. If he does this again, I will ask him to leave the chamber.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Nunavut.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Qujannamiik, Uqaqtittiji.* I will be splitting my time with the member for North Island—Powell River.

During this debate, I experienced *Ikiaqurmijaarniq*. I spoke so much from the depth of my heart that my throat and voice were shaking. I am sincerely concerned about the risks and safety of Nunavummiut and Canadians, especially with the downplaying of what happened in the last three weeks and especially with the extremism we have seen being downplayed to “having a different view”.

Much of the debate surrounding the Emergencies Act is because of the illegal blockade that was dismantled this weekend, which stemmed from the same extremism. I thank the implementation of the Emergencies Act and law enforcement. I believe our democracy could still be at risk, especially with the awful protests that bordered on extremism that were going on yesterday in Surrey, British Columbia, and the ongoing issues, as described by my colleague, the member of Parliament for Windsor West.

The intent of foreign interference is still in Canada. Some members have attempted to generate fear of the Emergencies Act and the implications of declaring it. Some have accused the NDP of aligning with the Liberals. I will remind the members that the NDP has been reluctant. Its members have sought clarity, have been principled and have sought to confirm that there will be accountability.

While I could share much more, I will only give examples of three instances of government interference in my life. I have an inherent mistrust in authorities and in law enforcement.

Statutory Order

In the 1950s, my grandfather was asked to go from Pond Inlet to Resolute to teach the High Arctic relocatees from northern Quebec how to survive. The Inuit from northern Quebec were tricked by authorities to go on the *C.D. Howe*, a supply ship. They were told life and the environment would be better, and wildlife would be abundant. In reality, there are months of darkness in the winter, and there is minimal wildlife throughout much of the year. Little did they know they were sent there by the federal government in the name of Canadian sovereignty.

When I was four years old, I had frozen my hands. I do not remember the pain. What I do remember is the nurse telling my mom she would cut my fingers off. I remember my mom protecting me and arguing against the nurse. I think that was my first exposure to the awesome power of protest. Thanks to my mom I still have my fingers. I love my mom.

By 1981, when we lived in Igloolik, my dad committed suicide. Some years later, I learned that my grandfather, my dad's dad had committed suicide. From what I have heard, my grandfather was greatly respected. It is believed the toll of being responsible for the Inuit in Resolute caused him great grief. I always wonder if Canada's policies on sovereignty had a role in this.

After my dad's suicide, my siblings and I were fostered, often separately. According to the government authorities, my mom could not cope well enough to raise us. Instead, the government saw it better to send us to different communities all over Nunavut. We did get to return to our mom many times.

Now, remember the map of Nunavut and how vastly orange I am keeping it. All communities are fly in and fly out only. Ultimately, I grew up in five of those communities at one time or another.

I think about how unoriginal my life is as an Inuk, as an indigenous person in Canada. I do not share this for members to feel sorry for me or the beautiful people I represent. I remind members why I have an inherent mistrust of government authorities and law enforcement.

Colonial laws dictated my childhood away from my loved ones. Despite that, I am here. I have spoken Inuktitut. My culture and Nunavummiut thrive. Here I am, now a duly elected member of Parliament for Nunavut.

● (1245)

In the face of this adversity, I am inspired by an Inuit song called *Silatugami* by Northern Haze, an Inuit rock band. *Silatugami*, translated, literally means "that who is wise". James Ungalaq, the lead singer, was inspired by the calm in his friend's voice. James was having internal turmoil, much like we are today. *Silatugami* speaks of the potential of the abuse of power and the fear of threats, extortion, deprivation and bullying. It is also a song of hope and calm for the future. This is the moment we are all in. We are all working for a better future. We need to be in a time of courage, of fearlessness and of willingness to learn.

When I think about the last three weeks, I think about the awesome privilege that so many Canadians are so used to. I know that Canadians can and will move beyond this pandemic.

Will the lives of all Canadians be impacted by this act? No. Am I concerned about its overreach? Yes. Is there anything we as legislators can do, if there is overreach? Yes. What level of oversight is there? It has the highest, which is parliamentary oversight. That is us in the House. Will there be accountability? Yes. Will I be willing to have the measures revoked if I see overreach? Yes.

With deep distrust of government interference, I know that the Emergencies Act is necessary to protect our democracy. There are checks and balances. The types of interferences in my life had no checks and balances. They were government overreach.

However, that is not what we are facing today. We are debating the impact of foreign interference in our democracy, which has been proven with the millions of donations that were allowed to infiltrate the minds of Canadians to break our domestic laws.

I have heard foreign interference influence members of Parliament and that deeply concerns me. It is why we must act with diligence to either the expiry of this declaration or hopefully sooner, when that foreign interference has been dealt with.

● (1250)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for sharing aspects of her own experience and the experience of her communities. I think it is a powerful reminder of the injustices that have been committed by federal governments toward indigenous peoples and also about, really, the abuses we have seen from overreaching federal governments.

I think it underlines the importance of freedom, the freedom of peoples to be authors of their own story, to work and to live where they wish. I think it is important to underline the fact, and I think there has been some misstatement around this, that there are people who have been involved in these protests from all different backgrounds. Being on Wellington Street, I have seen members of visible minority communities, indigenous people and people who are concerned about mandates from all walks of life, who do feel that this is an overreach.

The member seems, in the principles she articulates, to be very aligned with where I am and where we are in terms of not wanting the federal government to be able to interfere too much in people's lives. I do not understand why she is supporting this motion.

Ms. Lori Idlout: Madam Speaker, I am in support because I feel it is very important that we must continue to protect our democracy. I sincerely feel that our democracy is under threat. We have seen this through the media, through social media and through the comments that have been made in the House. I have seen the foreign interference that has infiltrated the minds of Canadians.

Qujannamiik.

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I think we need to respect the member for Nunavut's story because she is probably closer to the essence of what is really behind the protest that we have seen.

We cannot take it at face value that this is about vaccines and mandates. This is about an attack on our democracy and perhaps she would have some useful insight for us as to what would draw people to support the very evil-minded folks who have been behind this protest. We need to know that to more effectively reach them and bring them back into a democracy that includes them.

Ms. Lori Idlout: Madam Speaker, that was an important question.

I know, having had whole generations of my people be suppressed and oppressed for years, with their voices lost or prevented from being heard, that there are many Canadians who feel their voices have not been heard. I can understand why they want to be heard now, but there are ways that they can be heard, lawful ways that they can be heard. They can stick to their Canadian roots as kind human beings who respect each other as neighbours. There are ways to make sure that we are protecting those who cannot be vaccinated, and there are ways to make sure that we are following our public health measures so that we can be heard to ensure that we are doing better for our future.

Qujannamiik.

• (1255)

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, many NDP members have said that they are uncomfortable with the Emergencies Act and have even indicated that they might vote differently if there were no trucks left today.

When faced with the threat that the NDP would vote according to its conscience, the Prime Minister announced that this would be a confidence vote. That means that, today, there are no more parliamentary safeguards, or hardly any, because we are once again faced with the threat of another useless election.

Does the member not think that the Prime Minister is showing a lack of respect for the NDP members by preventing them from voting according to their conscience?

[English]

Ms. Lori Idlout: *Qujannamiik, Uqaqtittiji.*

This is more than just about the Prime Minister for me. This is about protecting our democracy. That is what we need to be voting on. We have to make sure that residents like the people in the riding of the member for Windsor West continue to be protected. We keep hearing they are still feeling the impacts of the extremist views that have penetrated our Canadian democracy.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Nunavut for perhaps one of the most powerful speeches I have ever heard in the House. I certainly hope all members of this place have an opportunity to listen to the power of her words.

Statutory Order

Last night one of my constituency offices was vandalized. I want to thank the members of my staff who have gone to clean up the mess this morning. They work hard every day to help people in our riding, because they care and want to see a better life for the people we serve.

I also want to thank the security folks in Campbell River who work all night to keep our streets safe and who contacted me last night to let me know. I deeply respect their work and dedication.

I want to thank all of the workers in this House who have driven or walked here during these unprecedented times to make sure that this place still works on a long weekend that is meant to be focused on their families. The House of Commons team shows up every single time, regardless of who is sitting in any seat in this House, and I admire them for it.

I am now in my seventh year of working in this place. I am a person who never wanted or planned to be a politician. I came here because, more than anything, I hate injustice.

I came here because I am a white girl who was adopted into an indigenous family, who at a very young age realized that how I was treated was different from the majority of my family. It took me years to understand that what I was seeing was racism and colonial systems that are everywhere in our country still today.

I learned time and again a very important lesson. I cannot participate in minimizing the voices of marginalized people. I cannot minimize any form of action that has any form of extremism at its roots. I take this very seriously because I know our planet's history and I know our country's history. When the majority is minimized, the bodies of marginalized communities pay. If I am not careful inside this white body, the bodies of my children, grandchildren and family are at risk, and I do not take that lightly.

Here we are and I am being very clear that I have heard people say they do not feel safe. They are the workers near the Ambassador Bridge, who watched their jobs become at risk because of the blockade. They were terrified when they heard folks in the U.S. ask why they should continue to partner with Canada when these kinds of things can happen. They have fought so hard to keep these jobs in Canada and know how fragile the relationship is.

They are the working people who are seeing the costs of their everyday expenses grow while watching their income stay the same or lessen, and just want enough to get by every day. They have been put in a position of constant worry that they will not be able to afford what they need to survive and they know they are not getting the help they need.

They are the young people who are scared because they know that the ability to purchase a home or even rent one is something they cannot imagine to be able to afford.

They are the citizens of Ottawa who live right where the blockade happened for three weeks and felt like there was no end in sight.

Statutory Order

They are the citizens I saw while walking to this place who were being yelled at for wearing masks.

They are the people with mobility challenges who had vehicles blocking their way so they could not get to where they needed to be. I asked several vehicles to move just a couple of feet so they would have the right to transport themselves safely through their community. The responses I received were a very clear and sometimes very rude “No”.

They are the people in this community who heard fireworks set off in the middle of the night as they slept. The occupation continued night after night. Can members imagine the fear of waking up hearing that noise and not knowing where it was coming from?

They are the poor people who were charged with the attempted murder of the RCMP officers.

They are the people who were blocked from returning home at the Coutts intersection for days.

They are the journalists across our country who are now terrified, who have been spat on, yelled at and called “fake news”, after years of service in their field.

They are the nurses, doctors and health care workers who for the last two years have put everything on the line for Canadians. They have been working too much overtime, have been feeling overwhelmed, have had to tell their patients to wait even in some cases for life-saving supports because the pandemic has overwhelmed our health care system. They have been threatened and told not to go out in public wearing anything that shows their profession because it is not safe.

• (1300)

People are afraid and I feel that as I listen to our debate on this long weekend. I believe in and have participated in peaceful protests, protests that were full of anger and frustration at the issues we wanted to change, fix or see taken seriously by government. That is not what is happening across this country, and I also do not believe it is over.

We saw an occupation that became a complete undermining of our democracy and our social structures. The leaders of this occupation had an MOU that spoke about overtaking the government. They invited opposition parties and the Governor General to have a discussion about how a new government would look.

I will not minimize this. I simply will not do it. I may not agree with many components of the processes of our institutions. I believe, in fact, that there is a lot of work to do to decolonize our systems to address key issues, like systemic racism, ableism and white privilege, and how these institutions continuously leave out workers, the poor, persons with disabilities, members of the LGBTQ2+ communities and people from BIPOC, Black, indigenous and people of colour communities. Even with that perspective, I will not minimize what it does to our communities when people do not respect the rule of law, when they flaunt their complete disregard for what a peaceful protest is and when they create a party on the street that does not respect the people who live where they are occupying.

Just yesterday when I was trying to walk to this place, I saw a business owner chasing two men out of his store with a stick. It was frightening. As I watched, I was trying to think of what I could do to help, but I also thought to myself that this is what happens when people disrespect the rule of law. When they set up bouncy castles and hot tubs in the streets and say, “Look how peaceful we are,” people become emboldened to act in a way that our social structures often prevent.

I will not minimize the fact that the lead organizers of this occupation are from groups of extremists who follow very clearly the beliefs of white supremacy. I believe there were many people out there who wanted to speak out about mandates and about their fear of the unknown and their future. I also know that the leaders were very clear about their agenda. That agenda scares me. I will not minimize it by saying there are just a few bad apples. I believe these people are very organized. I believe that they take advantage of people's fears and give people someone to blame with those fears.

This is where all of us as parliamentarians must look at history. Humanity sadly has a history of dehumanizing people from the communities I mentioned earlier. It is these people and these souls who often pay the most terrible price. I will not minimize the power of white supremacists and their ability to build fear. I will not minimize that the fear can become a weapon.

The NDP has used every tool at its disposal to get the federal government to act. We called for a debate specifically on the occupation. We moved a motion at committee to study the measures that keep money from coming from outside of our country to fund this occupation and make sure those dollars are all held to account.

We moved a motion to invite the U.S. ambassador to the foreign affairs committee to address concerns of the prominent U.S. political figures who are encouraging people to donate and support the convoy leaders. This was voted down by the Conservatives and the Liberals, with the Liberal member for Vancouver Centre saying that this is not an urgent issue, that we have too many more urgent things and she will definitely be voting against it. I simply disagree. I cannot imagine any other issue right now that is more urgent.

Here we are debating the Emergencies Act. I wish that all levels of government had worked together more efficiently, that members of all levels of government had not minimized who was coming to our nation's front door. Governing in whatever capacity a person has is not easy. I personally struggle often over the decisions I have to make in this place. This one has been very hard and it should be.

There are steps that all parliamentarians should be careful when taking. I wish I had heard a lot more thoughtful debate in this place. Sadly, there have been a lot of political shots taken, ones that further destabilize our democracy and our communities. On one side, we see the government dismissing legitimate fears and concerns from people who are afraid. On the official opposition side, people are stirring up fears and amping up dangerous rhetoric.

I will be voting yes. I will continue to take my duties seriously, with the great possibility of withdrawing my support at any moment.

• (1305)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, that was an amazing speech. I have two questions for the hon. member.

There has been a lot of talk about division, but I would be interested in hearing her comments on the role of disinformation in stoking that division. I would also like her comments on the naive suggestion that if only the Prime Minister had sat down and had a cup of coffee with the leaders of the convoy, somehow everyone would have gone home happy.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Madam Speaker, I am very concerned about disinformation. We are seeing the breadth of it grow. That is why it is so important that we all support the people who do this incredible work, our media and our journalists. They go out there and ask the hard questions. They want to report the information. Seeing people disrespect them and not respect the role that they play is very concerning to me. We need to be looking at where that disinformation is coming from and making sure we are holding those systems to account. That has to be way more rigorous in this country. We should all be seriously concerned about it.

As for the comment about sitting down with extremists, I could not agree more, but I do believe that this government needs to listen to the people in this country who have very strong voices of concern. That should be recognized, listened to and addressed in a respectful manner.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Madam Speaker, I could feel the passion of my hon. colleague in her speech. It is a lot of stress for those who are watching from home and it is the same inside this chamber.

This morning I walked to the House of Commons at 6:45 a.m. Wellington Street was completely cleared. I am just wondering if the member opposite would be interested in revoking the Emergencies Act if the protesters are still not there.

Specifically, in a press conference today, at 11 a.m., the CBC asked the Prime Minister if he would hold onto power for two to three months in case the truckers came back, and the Prime Minister said that indeed, that is what they are thinking about. Does the member agree with this abuse of power?

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Madam Speaker, I think the committee that oversees this needs to be set up immediately. I believe there needs to be a public inquiry. In so many ways, we have to look at what happened when the people arrived, how the police reacted and what was appropriate. There is a lot of work that needs to be done.

I will say very clearly to the member that if this government oversteps in any way the key things that we have identified that need to be addressed, we will definitely revoke the act. Twenty members have to do that work. However, I think all of us have to hold the government accountable, and not only the parliamentarians in this chamber but all Canadians, and I will be a part of that.

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• (1310)

[Translation]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague raised a few interesting points in her speech earlier. I do not have time to comment on her whole speech, but I would like to ask her a quick question.

One point she raised really struck me. She made a number of arguments in favour of using the Emergencies Act.

Here is the question I would like to ask her. Why did the government decide to invoke the Emergencies Act here and now in 2022?

How many times has it been used over the past 30 years? How many crises have been resolved without this act? What makes this crisis so much more significant than all the others? Why is the act necessary in this case? Why could the situation not have been resolved without it?

[English]

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Madam Speaker, that is a thoughtful question.

I think we should all be looking into why we are where we are today, and I do lay that at multiple levels of government within the provinces and within this country. I would have liked to see a much more coordinated approach. Again, people were driving across the country with the very clear intention of what they were going to do, and the response when they arrived here was, “The door is open. Park and do as you will.”

Unfortunately, when we get into a situation where the community is not safe, when we know that people are at risk, when we know that foreign money is interfering in our democracy, we have to stand up. We will have to monitor this very closely, and I look forward to doing so.

[Translation]

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to participate in this historic debate. I will share my time with the member for Beaches—East York.

Three weeks, a convoy of protesters arrived in Ottawa to begin an illegal occupation of our national capital. At times, the Conservative Party rallied to the cause, which was amplified by a number of extremists on social media and appeared to be funded in part by foreign donations.

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[English]

Those illegal blockades then spread to the Ambassador Bridge in Windsor, to the Coutts border crossing in Alberta and to other points across our nation. From that, we have seen supply chains disrupted, businesses shut down, workers forced to stay home and Canadians harassed in their own neighbourhoods. These blockades and occupations are illegal. They represent a threat to our economy, to our communities, to relationships with our key trading partners and to our international reputation.

Images of these illegal blockades are being broadcast around the world, images that are not representative of Canada, but are now affecting our global reputation. The blockades have massively impacted our supply chains and the availability of essential goods, and are putting at risk Canada's long-term economic prosperity. They have threatened our public safety and they are an affront to something all members in the House should dearly appreciate: the rule of law. This cannot and will not be allowed to stand in our country.

[Translation]

As the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, my focus is on ensuring that our post-COVID-19 economic recovery is dynamic, robust and sustainable. I know we are positioned to prosper thanks to our resources, our talent and our extraordinary ingenuity, not to mention our stability, our trade relations and our respect for the rule of law.

[English]

That is why it is so concerning that at the Ambassador Bridge in Windsor, billions of dollars in goods did not cross the border when the illegal blockades took place. The blockades in Coutts, Alberta and Emerson, Manitoba meanwhile have affected approximately \$48 million and \$73 million in trade each day, respectively.

The situation here in Ottawa is of concern. We have all seen it. Downtown businesses have been forced to close, putting people out of work. The Rideau Centre mall, which we all know, as well as the businesses operating in it, just down the street from Parliament, is currently losing \$3 million in business per day because it was forced to close due to harassment of staff and illegal actions from occupiers. These costs are real. They threaten businesses big and small, and they threaten the livelihoods of Canadian workers.

• (1315)

[Translation]

Canada is one of the world's principal economies. It relies on solid and secure supply chains to support our economy. However, because those supply chains are global, they are more vulnerable to risks and shocks. With the effects of the pandemic, as we have all seen, supply chains around the world have already suffered unprecedented pressure.

[English]

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in disruptions in production and in shipping. We have seen that companies across the world are experiencing demand uncertainty, supply and logistical delays, and significant operation stoppages. The blockades and protests have added to the already heavy burden that Canadian businesses across our nation and citizens have been asked to manage during

this pandemic. We cannot allow illegal blockades to hijack Canada's economic recovery and endanger the livelihoods of Canadian workers. That should be appreciated by all members in the House.

[Translation]

I would like to remind members of the House of some of the devastating effects of these blockades as we debate the confirmation of the declaration of the state of emergency under the Emergencies Act.

[English]

I can tell colleagues that auto sector manufacturers like GM, Stellantis, Honda and Ford had to either reduce or completely suspend manufacturing last week as a result of the Sarnia and Windsor trade corridor blockades. That should be of concern to all members of this House.

I can also point to Douglas Porter, chief economist at BMO. He stated, "For every week the protests continue, it could start to cut first quarter growth by up to a couple tenths of a per cent". That should be of concern to all members of this House. As we continue to reopen our economy and come out on the other side of the omicron wave, any reversal of our economic fortunes is an unnecessary blow to business owners and Canadians, who have already been through so much during this pandemic.

I know that every member of this House is concerned about the recovery, but we should all do what is right and make sure that there are no more illegal blockades in this country. The impact of these illegal blockades goes well beyond our borders, sadly. Canada has no closer friend and ally than the United States of America. It is a partnership forged based on geography, common interests, deep people-to-people connections, and strong and secure economic ties. It is a relationship we defended and protected when we renegotiated CUSMA, despite pleas from the Conservative Party for us to fold and capitulate, and it is one that we are defending here today, together.

[Translation]

During recent conversations with my international counterparts and private-sector stakeholders, it was obvious that both we and the United States recognized the importance of our integrated supply chains and the need to work together to ensure the free movement of goods between our two markets.

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It is for these reasons, and others, that our government took the unprecedented but necessary step of invoking the Emergencies Act to restore public order and to protect our economic well-being. This is not a decision we take lightly, nor is it one that we ever wanted to make, but it is a step that is needed in order to give law enforcement authorities the tools they need to face this very unique situation in our country.

These measures are reasonable and proportionate. Canadians at large agree, because they are looking to us to ensure predictability and the rule of law, protect supply chains and restore our economic vitality. Goldy Hyder of the Business Council of Canada, for example, said, “we welcome this as a step toward ending illegal blockades across the country and upholding the rule of law.”

Perrin Beatty, of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, to cite one more example, said, “The government’s decision to invoke the Emergencies Act indicates how serious the threat to public safety and our economy from the ongoing blockades at various points in Canada has become.”

In conclusion, I would remind colleagues on the Conservative bench that it was in fact Perrin Beatty who first introduced the Emergencies Act in 1988 as the former minister of national defence for the then Conservative prime minister Brian Mulroney. Perhaps the party that once portrayed itself as the defender of law and order, and as a champion of the free market, should re-examine how it is standing today.

We know who we are standing with on this side of the House. We are standing with workers at the Stellantis Windsor Assembly Plant, who had their shifts cut due to supply chain blockages. We are standing with small business owners in Ottawa, like those of Moo Shu Ice Cream and the local coffee shop Little Victories, which had to close their doors due to safety concerns. We are standing with Canadian truckers, who did their jobs and kept our shelves and our warehouses stocked during this pandemic. We are standing with Canadians who want these illegal blockades to end, and with the support of the House in today’s motion, they will.

● (1320)

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, my question for the minister is very simple. He talked about the still ongoing illegal blockades. Could he just provide one instance in Canada, ongoing right now, of a current illegal blockade and why the Emergencies Act is still required going forward?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: Madam Speaker, I think my colleague would agree, after everything we have seen in terms of violence and intimidation, that the way to act in light of this is to be prudent and to make sure that as the situation is fluid, we give law enforcement authorities all the powers they need to make sure not only that they clear the crossings that have been blocked in Canada, but that they have all the powers needed to keep these trade corridors open.

There are businesses in the member’s riding and I am sure he understands that we need to make sure our supply chains remain open at this critical point in our recovery.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, during the debates of the past few days, which I diligently attended, Liberal MPs have mentioned that the application of the Emergencies Act was necessary for the police force of Quebec, the Sûreté du Québec, to be present in Ottawa.

I looked into this over the past two days, and this appears to be false. It is enough to swear them in, which has been done in the past.

If the Emergencies Act was so necessary, and if democratic safeguards are so important, then why did members of the minister’s own caucus feel the need to mislead the House?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

However, I believe that in a debate such as this, we must choose our words very carefully and appeal to the public for calm.

I would ask my colleague to read a letter written by different police chiefs from across the country stating the need to obtain additional powers to manage this unique situation in Canada’s history.

I believe that we all want to restore peace and order across the country. These measures will help us stabilize the situation.

[English]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Bloc and the Conservatives keep giving the impression that things are fine at the Ambassador Bridge, but there are barriers lined up for miles in my constituency to prevent further action. In fact, since the Emergencies Act has been in place, convoys have been turned back, but there are still threats that could take place.

I want the minister to explain the consequences for Ontario and Quebec MPs should this route be choked off and how irresponsible it is to go back to having just the municipal police force take care of this international border crossing, which is responsible for 40% of our daily trade. It is totally irresponsible to put it on local municipalities, and I cannot understand why Ontario and Quebec MPs would want to put the onus entirely on them when the danger is still around.

● (1325)

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: Madam Speaker, the member said it well. Thirty per cent of all trade between Canada and the United States is using the crossing at the Ambassador Bridge. As the member said, it is one thing to have the bridge open, but, as I have reassured colleagues on both sides of the border, we need to make sure that we keep the crossing open. It is one thing for it to be blocked once, but it would be devastating for the Canadian economy if there were new blockades on that very critical infrastructure. The Emergencies Act will not only give power, as the member said, to local enforcement authorities, but they could rely on other forces around the country to make sure order is restored.

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We should all be concerned with keeping our critical trade corridors open in order to preserve jobs, to make sure our economy functions and to be seen as and remain a very reliable trading partner.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the question before us is whether we ought to confirm the government's declaration of an emergency pursuant to section 58 of the Emergencies Act. I have really struggled with the answer to that question, and I will get to that.

The first question we should all reflect on is a more basic one: How did it even come to this? Some Conservative colleagues have made the case that we could have ended the illegal blockades if only we had ended federal vaccine mandates, a Neville Chamberlain approach to pandemic management. Appeasing illegality is an affront to the rule of law, and we should put public health before politics.

Mandates will not be with us forever, and yes, we need to re-evaluate their use. However, it is also true that NACI has yet to confirm whether a third dose is properly a booster dose or should be considered part of the primary series. We should proceed cautiously as we lift measures that helped save lives.

Of course people are tired of pandemic rules. I was furious when Ontario's schools closed yet again to in-person learning in January. Protest is to be expected, and everyone has the right to peaceful protest, but that right does not extend to blocking highways and bridges. It does not extend to the intimidation, harassment, threats and the endless and deafening noise we have seen in our national capital. These are crimes, and they are quite obviously crimes.

We cannot paint every protester with the same brush, but we can judge people by the company they keep and we should never platform the language of treason, medical experiments, the Nuremberg Code or support for white supremacy, all of which we saw on our democracy's doorstep.

My genuine plea for those listening, for those who dislike the Prime Minister, for those who dislike public health measures and especially for those who sit in the Conservative caucus is to just remember that democracies are fragile. Encouraging lawlessness and emboldening anti-government, anti-democratic voices is a disservice to our country, no matter how much hatred they have for their opponents. If they do not stop fanning the flames, I am not certain we will be able to put out the fire.

Reflecting on my own side of the House, if we are so fearful of polarization, then we ought to be especially careful not to contribute to it ourselves. We are each sent here to represent our constituents, of course, but our obligations extend beyond any parochial interest. We are the trustees of our democracy; the rule of law; civil liberties; and peace, order and good government.

The illegal blockades represented an attack on these core ideas. The greatest criticism of how the blockades were removed is that they were not removed more quickly. The failure to enforce the law in Ottawa and the acquiescence to occupation emboldened similar blockades across the country at Emerson, Coutts and the Ambassador Bridge. Against a failed municipal and provincial response, a strong federal response was warranted. Therefore, I suffer no sym-

pathy for those who shut down our border crossings and inflicted harm on the residents of Ottawa.

However, in the interest of disappointing everyone in my audience, I do have concerns with the invocation of the Emergencies Act in the circumstances. One constituent I trust a great deal wrote to me that extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures. She is unquestionably right, but the law also remains the law, so let us turn to it for a moment.

Section 16 of the act defines a public order emergency as “an emergency that arises from threats to the security of Canada and that is so serious as to be a national emergency”. The shoe arguably fits, with this general definition in mind, but the act goes on to define two terms with great specificity.

First, and again in keeping with section 16, “threats to the security of Canada has the meaning assigned by section 2 of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act.” In turning to the CSIS Act, we see four possible meanings: espionage, foreign influenced activities, activities akin to terrorism, and the violent overthrow of the government. These are incredibly high standards.

In the order in council, the OIC, the government relies on activities akin to terrorism or, as the Minister of Justice said in the House, “We took measures that had been applied to terrorism and applied them to other illegal activity”. The specific section requires that there be activities in support of the threat or use of acts of serious violence against persons or property for the purpose of achieving a political, religious or ideological objective. It is obvious enough that the latter element is met, as warped as the ideological objectives may be, but have there been threats or acts of serious violence that themselves amount to a national emergency?

We know that dangerous and extremist elements are embedded within these protests and blockades. In Coutts, for example, we saw conspiracy to commit murder charges, with two of the accused connected to a far-right extremist group. We also saw the police seize a cache of guns and body armour, and in Ottawa we saw major intimidation of local residents and threats against the police if they enforced the law. As a parliamentarian, I acknowledge I am not privy to all of the information in the hands of the executive, and there may well be even more dangerous and coordinated elements at play.

• (1330)

It also strikes me that these serious threats are ancillary to the blockades, and it is the blockades that constituted the emergency. A national emergency, after all, is also a defined term within the act. It means:

an urgent and critical situation of a temporary nature that

(a) seriously endangers the lives, health or safety of Canadians and is of such proportions or nature as to exceed the capacity or authority of a province to deal with it, or

(b) seriously threatens the ability of the Government of Canada to preserve the sovereignty, security and territorial integrity of Canada.

There is an additional requirement that no other federal law be sufficient to meet the emergency as well. It is frustrating that the government has not clearly articulated which ground it relies on here, and it appears that it likes to rely on both. When we look at the illegal blockades and the negative impact they wrought on so many lives, I do think there is a fair argument that they meet the definition of a national emergency as long as we understand “capacity” to mean both whether a province could act in theory as well as the reality of their action.

Again, if the blockade is at issue, when we look at the threats of serious violence, the violence that must itself constitute the national emergency at issue, it is unclear how the definition is met. To meet the act's requirements, it seems apparent to me that we need to re-interpret “serious violence to persons or property” to mean economic harm. I am often in support of large and liberal interpretations of the law, but I am not convinced we want economic harm to trigger the act, unless we would be comfortable with the act being used in other instances of economic harm, the most recent one in memory being the railway blockades in solidarity with the Wet'suwet'en.

This is all perhaps too lawyerly, too technical an objection. Other levels of government had failed to act or acted too slowly. Legal gaps certainly exist in addressing foreign funding and foreign influence operations and crowdfunding for illegal domestic activities, and the emergency measures seem to have worked.

It is also true, as I say, that I do not have all of the intelligence information that the executive has. My answer to that is a simple one, and I know many will find it inadequate, but contorting the application of the law in order to defend the rule of law is not a position I find comfort in.

Expert Wesley Wark wrote recently that the Emergencies Act was unusable because of the high threshold in section 2 of the CSIS Act. However, he subsequently came around to the idea of shoe-horning the law to fit, because of his perception of the nature of the threat and the missing response from other levels of government.

Expert Leah West recently wrote:

As someone who fervently believes in the rule of law, I'm desolated by what we've witnessed this month: a failure to enforce the law by 2 levels of government created a crisis that the 3rd had to contort the law to end.

That is a fair summation.

Now, whatever one thinks of the legal contortion, and the ends may well justify the means and the courts will weigh in on the law, let us return to the role of Parliament.

In the coming months, we will need to address the shortcomings in the laws, perhaps to better protect critical infrastructure and most certainly to better follow the money of foreign influence operations and crowdfunding for illegal activities, but with proper due process. Assuming the threshold question is met here, it is still not at all

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clear to me whether the government continues to need the ability to freeze bank accounts without due process, if it ever did. Usefulness and effectiveness are very different standards as compared with necessity and proportionality.

Now, where does it leave us for tonight's vote on the invocation of the Emergencies Act and section 58?

Putting aside my concerns around the threshold or due process, the effect of section 58 is that a yea vote extends emergency measures while a nay vote simply revokes the powers as of the day of the negative vote. A nay vote need not mean impugning the actions of the government over the last week. Whatever one thinks of the necessity and proportionality of the emergency powers at the time they were invoked, whatever one thinks of the threshold that triggers the act in the first place, the question before us is whether the powers remain necessary and proportionate to the circumstances today.

I appreciate the federal leadership over the last week. This is not the War Measures Act, as this particular legislation highlights the role of the charter and provides for a significant amount of independent and parliamentary scrutiny. However, I am skeptical that the strict legal test was met for the act's invocation, and I am not convinced that the emergency measures should continue to exist beyond today.

I would vote accordingly but for the fact that it is now a confidence vote. My disagreement, the disagreement I have expressed here, does not amount to non-confidence, and I have no interest in an election at this time.

• (1335)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before I go to questions and comments, I do want to remind members not to be debating and chatting across the way while another member has the floor. It is very rude and not very parliamentary.

The hon. member for Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Madam Speaker, the former speaker, whom I respect and esteem greatly, was mistaken in one respect: He said that he would disappoint everybody, but he has not disappointed me. I think his analysis is accurate. The actions were unlawful. It was appropriate to end the blockades.

He also correctly states that it was perhaps not necessary to use the Emergencies Act. He is entirely correct that if we vote nay tonight, this would end the Emergencies Act and the legal emergency, effectively instantly, without necessarily invalidating that which was done before.

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I believe I am also right that all of the other things that take place under the act, including a review of the actions over the course of the next year, would take place if there was a nay vote tonight. As he has obviously looked into this, I am asking if that in fact is correct.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Madam Speaker, the hon. member is correct.

To be honest, it is those additional measures that actually give me greater comfort. When we see that there is a parliamentary committee that will be struck, when we see that there is an inquiry, when we know that 20 members of Parliament or 10 senators can call for a revocation before the end of the 30-day cycle and we can have a vote on that, I would hope that the government is itself deeply scrutinizing the usefulness and the necessity of these measures as we go forward. I do not see that these measures are going to need to continue to exist for the full 30 days, so whether they end through an act of Parliament or an act of the government, we will see.

I would just emphasize that the measures he has highlighted are incredibly important, and they do give me comfort.

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have to say that I have a great deal of regard for my colleague, who did not disappoint with this speech. He is always calm and thoughtful, and he always provides an independent analysis. I admire that about him and think that it is very honourable.

He answered my question to some extent in his earlier remarks, but I would nevertheless like to make a comment and ask him my question.

First, I would like to know if the member agrees with the idea that had this crisis been better managed from the outset, by any level of government, we would not be having this discussion today.

The question I want to ask him concerns the fact that this vote on the Emergencies Act has become a confidence vote. Does he not think that proceeding in this way somewhat undermines the validity of the democratic exercise that we are called to have in this House? Is this not twisting the arms of the parties and members that may have a different opinion and do not want this to be a confidence vote?

[English]

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Madam Speaker, in 2015 we ran on a platform to encourage freer votes in the House of Commons. That platform said in effect that there would be free votes except on three issues: platform commitments, human rights or charter-related issues, and confidence votes, including budget considerations. It was not only budget considerations, though. My reading of our parliamentary history is that it is well within the right of the government to declare this a confidence vote, and I will obviously abide by that.

To the member's previous comments around the failure of other levels of government, this was absolutely a matter that needed federal leadership because of that failure, and, as I said, the federal government showed that leadership.

• (1340)

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Qujannamiik, Uqaqtittiji.*

Yesterday there was news that demonstrators met in locations in Vancouver and Chilliwack and at the Pacific Highway border crossing in Surrey, B.C., which was closed and required reopening because of the demonstrators.

Would you agree that this is evidence of foreign interference and requires national oversight from us as parliamentarians?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I will remind the hon. member that she is to address questions and comments to the Chair and not directly to the member.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Madam Speaker, in the four branches in section 2 of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act, there is reference to foreign influence. It is generally understood to be state-sponsored foreign influence. I do think we ought to be wary here, and perhaps have permanent rules with proper due process to address that issue going forward.

I do not think we want to address that issue, which is not going to go away, tomorrow or within 30 days. I think we are going to want more permanent rules that are firmer and have proper due process.

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Madam Speaker, I feel nostalgic as I rise this afternoon to participate in the debate on the Emergencies Act.

I remember when I first arrived in Parliament in February 2006, bright-eyed and full of hope. To me, Parliament represented everything that was good: freedom, democracy and mutual respect. In the spring of 2006, on the lawn in front of the Peace Tower, there were young kids playing soccer, teens throwing frisbees, and young couples holding hands.

Canada was a peaceful country. Canadians had put their trust in a Conservative government with a strong leader, the Right Hon. Stephen Harper, and a talented team determined to make this country stronger, more stable and more united.

This was a government that took responsibility and worked hard, every day, on behalf of all Canadians. The country was safe, and there was a sense of confidence in the government. No dream was too big. Our country was the envy of the entire world. We were a country filled with promise, opportunity and a dream, the dream of enabling our children and grandchildren to prosper and earn a good living.

It is now 2022, and I no longer recognize my country, my Canada. Since the Liberal Party came to power, Canadians and Quebecers have become tired, stressed and disillusioned. They have lost confidence in this clumsy, intransigent government whose respect for and defence of fundamental rights leave something to be desired. They feel a collective disappointment in what is currently going on.

The government wants to invoke the Emergencies Act just because some Canadians were simply asking to speak to the Prime Minister. These are proud, patriotic Canadians who are worried about their future. They simply would like to have a frank discussion and to see the government release a well-formulated plan to improve the situation. These people were only asking for a show of leadership. They wanted to feel that there was a captain at the helm of our country. These people travel the roads day and night, all year long, to deliver food and essential goods to contribute to our well-being. All they needed was support from government.

This government is doubling down on its incompetence. We are all living in a climate of widespread uncertainty. This winter has been very hard. The coming spring holds great uncertainty. What will the summer hold, and what awaits us in the fall, as far as the pandemic is concerned? I wish for a return of hope, the hope that the Conservative team, with its new leadership, will be ready to replace this ineffective, incompetent and worn-out government.

This weekend is a dark chapter in our history. How do we explain this to future generations? How can I explain to my five grandchildren whom I adore—my little Maéva, my little Béatrice, my little Loïc, my little Delphine and my little Arthur—that men and women who were well intentioned, but desperate and too determined, were removed using intimidation and violence, right here in our democratic and peaceful country? This is not the Canada I want to leave as a legacy. There are no winners. We are all losers today.

I do know, however, that all is not lost. We still have the hope and strength to recover from these crises and the unforeseen events that are yet to come. Canadians from coast to coast to coast are going through a difficult time, but if we work together, it will make us stronger, more united and more ambitious.

I think of our Olympic athletes who made us proud over the past two weeks. I think of all the hard-working Canadians in our health care system, and those who go above and beyond for their families and for a better life. I think of all the opportunities we have here in Canada to make our mark and succeed.

We need to remain optimistic. Let us be strong. Let us all be united and stand in solidarity to build the Canada of tomorrow, despite all of the challenges and obstacles in our path and despite the inevitable consequences of having a Liberal government that made poor choices that will catch up to us sooner or later.

• (1345)

Together, we have everything we need to regain confidence in our abilities, to prove to ourselves that anything is possible, to heal our wounds, and to regain the strength and determination that typify all those who defend our freedoms and live in this big, beautiful country full of promise.

As of today, in the House, we all need to make a commitment so that history does not repeat itself. We need to commit to talking to our constituents, explaining to them the path that we should follow to continue with our social initiatives, working to rebuild their confidence in their elected officials, and working to give them back their faith in the future by doing something as simple as listening and showing empathy. We have a duty to talk to each other, respect each other and understand each other.

Statutory Order

Over the past few days, I got a lot of emails and calls from people who asked me to be their voice in Parliament, to get things moving, as they said. I sensed their impatience and felt all of the responsibility that comes with the fact that they put their confidence in me to represent them. I thank them for their kind words and their wise and inspiring advice.

I will carry the torch as I humbly represent my constituents and make their lives better this year. I have shown my colleagues all the hope that I have, but I have reservations about fulfilling my hopes under the current government. I am a man of faith and conviction, but I am also a realist, as are Canadians who are no fools.

Since being elected in 2015, the Liberal government may have initially responded to a certain need for freedom, a renewed desire for feminism, a new freedom to smoke marijuana and to be whoever we want, however we want, but let us admit that we are now seeing the consequences of the Liberals' shortcomings. Experts will tell us the full implications, but for now, an entire generation has lost its footing, its roots and its social identity. Sad to say, all this harping on our differences has cost us our unity, our common sense of duty and sharing, our consideration for the needs of the most vulnerable and needy. In many respects, the pandemic has shown us that unfortunately, many have abandoned their roots and those who brought them into the world. That is so sad.

It gets worse. Some people have no idea what is going on. Some pretend they do not know. Many are afraid to contemplate a future in which the Liberal Party has legalized hard drugs and prostitution, as promised in their platform. Some tell themselves it will be okay because we will know what our children and grandchildren are consuming and girls and women will get better treatment. The reality of life on the streets has not changed on the black market. We will witness the spectacle of a society with more and more problems related to mental illness and crime, because the two go hand in hand. We should expect to see more violence. This situation is being managed by a clown, if I may say so, but the fact is, this is just a taste of what may await us.

When I am back in the country, where I was born, where life is good, I should be living my life to the fullest, but I cannot be at peace knowing that many people will suffer the consequences of this Prime Minister's disastrous choices and that all his cronies will use his immoral policies to fatten their bank accounts.

We were born free. We were living in a free and economically prosperous country—

• (1350)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Lévis—Lotbinière is out of time. He can continue during questions and comments.

[English]

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Madam Speaker, what a change that was. I am wondering if the member listened to the speech this morning by the hon. member for Parry Sound—Muskoka. My goodness, what a change in tone that was, and not for the better.

*Statutory Order**[Translation]*

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Madam Speaker, this gives me the opportunity to finish the last paragraph of my speech.

We were born free. We were living in a free and economically prosperous country, but with the Liberal Party in power, we are now saddled with a dismal image, a far cry from what was once a welcoming country known around the world as a leader in all areas.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to react to my colleague's speech. I need to express my disagreement with many of the things my colleague brought up in his speech, even though we will likely vote similarly on this motion.

I would like some further explanation.

From what I understand, some of the people who were protesting on the other side of the street were there for legitimate reasons, but others were no choir boys. His speech gave me the impression that he thought they were all wonderful people. I would like to hear his thoughts on that.

We are talking about the Emergencies Act, but I did not hear him talk about this act. I think this is a serious situation. I for one did not wander the streets carrying a Canadian flag.

Does he think that the protesters were all choir boys?

What does he think of the Emergencies Act?

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I have a message for him.

Everything changes. This too shall pass. We must remain strong and proud. We must support one another, help those who need our help, share our strengths and weaknesses, face challenges with dignity, and spread joy, peace and love wherever we go. It is up to each of us to make a difference.

I hope these wise words bring hope and peace to us all as we contemplate Canada's future.

[English]

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to ask a question and make a comment. I come from the corporate world, and we always sat down with our customers and created focus groups to understand what their needs were. I would like to hear from the member why the government could not do the same and negotiate with the truckers to come to a peaceful resolution.

• (1355)

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Madam Speaker, that is an excellent question and one I ask myself every day.

If, on day one, the Prime Minister had agreed to meet with the people gathered before Parliament, perhaps we would not have had to go through everything we went through over the past three weeks. All the people wanted was to talk to the Prime Minister. He could have met with their leaders.

[English]

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour and privilege to rise today to talk about the Emergencies Act. I think the question a lot of Canadians are asking, and I know most of the parliamentarians here today have talked about it, is how we got here and why we are here.

It has been almost two years to the day, and we are in a time when provinces are lifting their COVID mandates, virtually across the country. In my home province of Ontario, for example, Premier Doug Ford has announced his plan to lift COVID mandates, and on March 1 a significant one will be that he is lifting the vaccine passports. That is very significant for the province, and for people who are vaccinated and unvaccinated.

About 10 days ago, the Conservative Party brought a motion to the House and asked for a plan that the Prime Minister and his team would give Parliament and Canadians on how we can move forward, how we can lift the COVID mandates federally and allow everybody to move on, and how we can unite the country and move together.

We are a very divided country, despite what the Liberals may say. We are a very divided country at this time, and we need to move forward. There was a vote a week ago, and the Liberals defeated that motion, failing to give Canadians a plan to move forward. My point is that if the premiers were not doing anything and lifting mandates, it might make sense for the Prime Minister to double down and continue on with his divisive comments and everything else, but when we are looking at the facts, the facts are that mandates are being lifted not just in Canada, but around the world. Today we saw in England that Boris Johnson has virtually lifted all restrictions, and the Prime Minister is continuing to double down.

To my mind, that is how we got to where we are. If he had listed a reasonable road map, I do not believe anybody would have come here. I do not believe we would be talking about this today, and I think everybody would have a path forward. We could start to heal this country and move forward.

This morning I listened to a long-time friend of mine. He has been a colleague for many years. He is the member of Parliament for Oxford. He was the first elected police chief in Parliament, and he is a very wise individual. He and I served on the public safety committee over 10 years ago together, at a time when we were reviewing the outcomes of the G8 and G20 summits, but specifically the G20 summit. No one would believe who the police chief was at the time. I know most people in here know this, but it was actually the Minister of Emergency Preparedness. That chief was there to tell us about what he did at the G20 summit.

They had an integrated security unit at that time. I made a note of what they called it. They did not need to invoke this act.

• (1400)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member will have six minutes the next time that this matter is before the House.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

FATHER VITO MARZILIANO

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is with a heavy heart that I rise as the Catholic community grieves the sudden passing of a beloved friend, mentor and humble servant of the Lord, Father Vito Marziliano. Father Vito was larger than life: kind, caring and joyful. He was an inspirational leader and servant, and his thought-provoking homilies and the wisdom he shared will live forever in our hearts and minds.

When I think of Father Vito, I am reminded of the prayer of St. Francis:

Lord make me an instrument of Your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love.
Where there is injury, pardon.
Where there is doubt, faith.
Where there is despair, hope.
Where there is darkness, light.
Where there is sadness, joy.

Father Vito embodied this prayer. He was truly a gift from God. He had a profound ability to connect with others, and everyone felt his kindness. The unprecedented outpouring of grief and love by those who treasured Father Vito is a testament to the depth of his connection with our community.

Rest in peace, Father Vito.

[Member spoke in Italian]

Prega per noi.

FRED RUSSELL

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, three years ago, I rose in this place and wished my friend, World War II veteran Fred Russell, a happy 100th birthday. Fred passed this fall at the age of 103 years old.

He served overseas for the entire length of World War II. He survived the Dieppe raid. Returning to France and Normandy in the Normandy landings, he marched into Dieppe with his fellow Canadians in the liberation of that town, and later served and fought through northwest Europe and Germany.

Returning to Edmonton after the war, Fred married Eileen and raised a family of four children, 12 grandkids, 25 great-grandkids and two great-great-grandkids.

As if years in the army serving our country were not enough, Fred continued to help by volunteering with the Elmwood Park community, his church, Scouts and the Edmonton Police Service.

Statements by Members

When I look around at what is happening in our country today, I can only say we need more Fred Russells. May Fred rest in peace. God bless him.

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the past three weeks, we have seen several disturbing images of members of the media facing repeated forms of abuse. They have been subjected to slanderous slogans hung from vehicles, forms of physical and verbal intimidation, and constant heckles and jeers from protesters and occupiers.

While reporting on the blockade in Surrey, B.C., at the border crossing, a camera crew was swarmed by protesters and had to be escorted out of the area by police. In Edmonton, a media outlet felt it necessary to remove the company branding from one of its vehicles out of fear for the safety of its employees. Media crews right here in Ottawa, the capital of our nation, had to hire security in order to cover events right out in front of this building.

This is unacceptable. In a democratic and free society, the role of the media, and the freedom of the press to report without intimidation, are essential. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize and thank all journalists, camera crews and members of the media who have covered the front lines of this event for the past few days. The importance of their work can often go unrecognized, but it is essential to our society. We thank them.

[Translation]

HOUSE OF COMMONS ADMINISTRATION

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Bloc Québécois members, I would like to salute parliamentary staff for their absolutely exceptional work over the past few days during these extraordinary sittings of the House.

While police forces were in the streets putting an end to the siege of Parliament Hill, men and women here worked tirelessly so we could debate confirmation of the Emergencies Act.

From the cafeteria and maintenance workers to the Sergeant-at-Arms' team, from the clerks to the security guards, everyone showed up despite the craziness of the past few days. They have done an amazing job.

In particular, I would like to acknowledge the herculean task performed by the interpreters as we debated for 16 hours a day this weekend. They too were just amazing.

I hope they will be able to get some rest and relaxation. Well done, everyone, and thank you.

*Statements by Members***OLYMPIANS FROM THE OUTAOUAIS**

Mrs. Sophie Chatel (Pontiac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to rise virtually in the House today to draw attention to the extraordinary achievements of our athletes from the Outaouais region.

Did members know that one third of the Olympic cross-country ski team came from the Outaouais? I want to applaud Katherine Stewart-Jones, Antoine Cyr and Laura Leclair for their excellent performances at the 2022 Winter Olympic Games.

They have inspired us during this very difficult period, and we needed it. They are models of determination, resilience and perseverance. They have become such excellent role models for the young athletes of the region. Once again, I congratulate Katherine, Antoine and Laura. The entire Outaouais region is proud of them.

* * *

● (1405)

[English]

HUMAN TRAFFICKING AWARENESS DAY

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, February 22 is Canada's National Human Trafficking Awareness Day, thanks to the hard work of the all-party parliamentary group to end human trafficking and modern-day slavery.

Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery that turns people into objects to be used and exploited. It is profitable, it is vicious and it is growing. It is happening right here in our own country and around the globe.

In Canada, the vast majority of human trafficking victims are women and girls born right here. Many of them are indigenous. Globally, more than 40 million people are currently enslaved.

To the victims and survivors of human trafficking, I say that they are not invisible. We see them, and we will steadfastly continue the fight against human trafficking, both in Canada and around the world.

I ask my hon. colleagues and all Canadians to, on February 22, take a moment to learn about human trafficking, raise awareness in their communities, support survivor-led organizations and get involved and create the change. Together we can end human trafficking.

* * *

HUMAN TRAFFICKING AWARENESS DAY

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow is National Human Trafficking Awareness Day, as my colleague has just said.

Human trafficking is a form of modern slavery that turns people into objects to be used and exploited. In Canada, human trafficking takes on many forms, including sex trafficking, forced labour, forced marriages, organ trafficking and cybersex trafficking. Ninety-three per cent of the victims are Canadian, 97% are women and children, and 50% are indigenous.

Slavery is used in many of the products that Canada imports. Human trafficking is vicious, it is profitable and it is growing. It is time to end human trafficking.

There are four things people can do on February 22 and every day thereafter: One, learn about it; two, tell others; three, support anti-trafficking organizations; and four, get involved politically.

* * *

CONTRIBUTIONS OF BLACK CANADIANS

Mr. Shafqat Ali (Brampton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, James William Roman escaped slavery in Maryland and came to Canada via the Underground Railroad. His grandson, Dr. Charles Lightfoot Roman, was born on May 19, 1889, in Port Elgin, Ontario.

Dr. Roman was one of the first Black Canadians to graduate from McGill University's Faculty of Medicine. He was also one of the first Black Canadians to enlist for service in the First World War. Moreover, he was a surgeon, author, researcher, lecturer and a recognized expert in industrial medicine.

To this day, Dr. Roman's grandson fondly recalls how his grandparents impacted the lives of Canadians in times prior to universal health care. They were a heroic team of doctor and nurse whose back door was never closed to those in need, because their kitchen served double duty as a public clinic.

Let us always be thankful for the many contributions of Black Canadians to our great country.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are more divided than ever before, but one topic all Canadians can agree on is the cost of living. Every visit to the grocery store, every time we fill up our vehicles or we get our home heating bills, Canadians are reminded of the Prime Minister's inflationary monetary policy.

Inflation was 4.8% in December and 5.1% in January. Many economists say the true cost of inflation is over 10%. Housing costs have doubled, rent is unaffordable and in some cases used cars are now worth more than new cars. Who would have ever thought?

Seniors, working families, rural Canadians and urban Canadians are all stretched to the max. It is time for the Prime Minister and the finance minister to get their heads out of the Davos clouds and start listening to Canadians.

• (1410)

AGRICULTURE DAY

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow, Canadians across the country will raise their forks in honour of the great women and men who grow and deliver the very best food on the planet.

[Translation]

Canada's Agriculture Day is an opportunity for all of us to thank Canadian farmers and food processors, who work tirelessly to put high-quality food products on our kitchen tables.

[English]

Canada's hard-working farmers and food processors are the backbone of our economy, especially in our rural communities, and we are grateful for their dedication and hard work. Tomorrow, let us celebrate Canada's Agriculture Day.

Our farmers and food processors mean so much to us, to our families, to our communities and to our country. Let us raise a fork to the food we love and to the people who produce it.

* * *

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Ms. Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to represent the riding of Haldimand—Norfolk, which has been a refuge for so many seeking freedom from the early days before Confederation.

In 1793, the act to limit slavery declared that any enslaved person who reached Upper Canada, which the abolitionists called the promised land, became free upon arrival. Right down the street from my home was one of the last stops on the Underground Railroad, the village of Canfield in Haldimand, where the remains of a community of former runaway slaves was recently discovered.

Since then, Black Canadians have fought in wars for Canada and have made contributions in politics, arts, sports, business, academia, medicine, law and many other areas. These contributions tell us that Black history is not separate from but an integral part of Canadian history.

This month, we celebrate Black history and freedom. I thank Haldimand—Norfolk for preserving this Canadian legacy of freedom. Let freedom reign.

* * *

[Translation]

PROTESTS IN QUEBEC CITY AND OTTAWA

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in any situation where police intervention is required, whether it is to maintain or restore public order, our peace officers must demonstrate a strong sense of individual and collective responsibility. They must maintain their composure in the face of insults being hurled at them, and still demonstrate empathy.

Cohesiveness is the key to success, and I want to congratulate the police officers of the Quebec City police service who, supported by officers of the Sureté du Québec, were able to protect the right of

Statements by Members

citizens to protest while maintaining public order in the centre of the national capital of Quebec. Over two weekends, their work allowed citizens to be heard while respecting the lives of people who live downtown.

On a similar note, I would also like to acknowledge the work of the thousands of police officers from across Canada who managed to regain control of the streets here in Ottawa without excessive force and while respecting the citizens who wanted to be heard.

The balance between freedom of expression and maintaining public order is based on a healthy democracy. Let us not take it for granted.

* * *

CANADIAN OLYMPIC ATHLETES

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is closing out the 2022 Winter Olympic Games in 4th place among the countries with the most medals, with a total of 26 medals.

[English]

Throughout the past two weeks, team Canada's athletes presented extraordinary performances, making our country shine internationally. What an amazing team.

[Translation]

We can be especially proud of our Quebec athletes, who excelled and are bringing home 13 medals.

I will name them: in snowboarding, Max Parrot and Eliot Grondin; in freestyle skiing, Mikaël Kingsbury, Marion Thénault, Miha Fontaine and Lewis Irving; in speed skating, Valérie Maltais, Kim Boutin, Steven Dubois, Charles Hamelin, Pascal Dion and Jordan Pierre-Gilles; and Women's hockey, Marie-Philip Poulin, Ann-Renée Desbiens and Mélodie Daoust.

Congratulations, Team Canada.

* * *

[English]

EMERGENCIES ACT

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today this House will hold a historic vote. Years from now, many in this room will reflect on this debate, the crisis that led us here and the profound historical impact it will have.

At times, debate has been heated on both sides, and I feel the rhetoric has served no one. However, we cannot understate the reasons we are here. The hate, intolerance, threats, destruction and intimidation have left a lasting scar on our national psyche. Canadians have been left shocked and traumatized.

Oral Questions

Today's vote will happen, and tomorrow the wounds will remain. We all have an obligation to fix our political system, which is failing Canadians. We must fight for proportional representation, so Canadians feel that their votes count. We must truly address climate change, so parents can see we care about their children's futures. We must provide the supports for gig workers, so they can have a livable wage. We must build affordable housing and secure it as a human right.

We love this country, so let us fix it and leave it in a better state for future generations. We owe Canadians that much.

* * *

● (1415)

[Translation]

OTTAWA PROTESTS

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, 25 days after the first trucks of the convoy of occupiers arrived, the streets of Ottawa are finally free. It is all thanks to the exceptionally well coordinated work of seven police forces, including the Sûreté du Québec.

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I want to thank all the officers who helped put an end to the siege of Ottawa and Parliament Hill. They showed impressive professionalism and unfailing patience.

Three days ago, it seemed almost impossible to imagine a peaceful resolution to this occupation without confrontation, but that is the scenario that literally materialized before our eyes while we could watch the operation from our office windows.

In closing, a special acknowledgment goes to the impeccable work of the Parliamentary Protective Service, thanks to which members could continue to work safely in the name of democracy, despite circumstances that could have been dangerous.

I thank every one of them for their professionalism and effectiveness.

* * *

[English]

EMERGENCIES ACT

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in 1970, Tommy Douglas took a stand against government overreach when he courageously opposed the use of the War Measures Act by Pierre Elliott Trudeau, yet where is that courageous and historical NDP today? New Democrats are standing up for the son of Pierre Trudeau, giving him extraordinary powers to freeze bank accounts of political dissidents without due process.

When the Liberals fired unvaccinated minorities in the public service, the NDP did not stand up for them. When the Liberals enacted policies at the border that caused blue collar workers their jobs, the NDP did not stand up for them. When those marginalized and traumatized by government mandates and restrictions mobilized into the largest pan-Canadian demonstration ever seen, the NDP did not stand up for them.

I call on my NDP colleagues today to use this rare and extraordinary power they possess in determining the vote on the Emergen-

cies Act tonight to stand against giving Liberals unprecedented power. I call on them to stand up for workers; I call on them to stand up for democratic rights; I call on them to stand up for everyday Canadians and vote no.

* * *

[Translation]

LOUIS RIEL DAY

Hon. Jim Carr (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the province of Manitoba, February 21 marks Louis Riel Day.

[English]

Each year, we reaffirm Louis Riel for what he was: a passionate leader advocating justice for the Métis people. He inspired the birth of Manitoba. Distressed by what he saw, the loss of Métis traditional lands, Riel called for action.

[Translation]

At the age of 25, Louis Riel formed a provisional government and presented a declaration of rights to Canada.

[English]

On May 12, 1870, the bill became the Manitoba Act. One hundred and fifty-one years later, on July 6, 2021, I was witness to the Government of Canada and the Manitoba Métis Federation signing the Manitoba Métis Self-Government Recognition and Implementation Agreement, an historic step in the renewal of the nation-to-nation principle and recognition of the Manitoba Métis Federation as an indigenous government.

Let us reflect and celebrate.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Candice Bergen (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Conservatives, along with others, do not believe that the Emergencies Act was necessary to clear the protests and blockades. Many experts, including people like Chris Lewis, former commissioner of the OPP, are saying the government had all the tools it needed and the Emergencies Act was an overreach.

The Prime Minister reported this morning that Ottawa is clear, the trucks are gone and the borders are open, but he says that an emergency remains. Can the Prime Minister tell us: What is the criteria for this emergency to be declared over, and on what date will he end these unprecedented and invasive measures?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Emergencies Act is enabling critical measures to end these illegal blockades and prevent further occupations. We have heard from police chiefs, security experts and municipal and provincial leadership that it has been essential to the response. We have been very clear that these measures will apply only when and where necessary and, again, these tools are to supplement local capacity, not negate or override it. As soon as these measures are no longer required, we will gladly lift them. This is responsible leadership.

• (1420)

Hon. Candice Bergen (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, can the Prime Minister tell us exactly what powers the Emergencies Act is giving him today that do not already exist? I know he said he needed the act to force tow trucks to tow trucks away, but as he has already said, the trucks are gone, and so we do not need tow trucks any longer.

What power is needed right now, today, under the Emergencies Act that does not already exist under current Canadian law?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after weeks of people being harassed in their neighbourhoods and seeing small businesses forced to close; after billions of dollars were stalled in trade, putting people's livelihoods at risk; after evidence of increased ideologically-motivated, violent extremism activity across the country; and after a flood of misinformation and disinformation washed over Canada, including from foreign sources, it became clear that local and provincial authorities needed more tools to restore order and keep people safe. I ask all members of Parliament to stand up for Canada this evening.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister talked earlier today about mending fences. He called on Canadians to call their unvaccinated cousins and for Canadians to aim for more decency in our public discourse.

I would like to ask the Prime Minister if he would be willing to lead by example and apologize to Canadians that he called “racist” and “misogynist” and described as having “unacceptable views”, because he disagreed with them. I think it would go a long way. Would the Prime Minister rise today, and would he lead the way?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the right of Canadians to express their opinions and the right of Canadians to protest peacefully and to disagree with their government are something we will always stand up to protect and uphold. Even with the implementation of the Emergencies Act, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms continues to apply.

Quite frankly, continuing to demonstrate the way Canadians are there for each other, not harming their neighbours, not occupying cities but being there for frontline workers, being there to support each other, that has been the story of this blockade and this pandemic.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us take the Prime Minister at his word.

This morning, the member for Beaches—East York stated in the House that he was not convinced that the emergency measures

should remain in place after today. He also said that he would vote accordingly, but that it is now a vote of confidence.

Is it true that the Prime Minister, after appealing for unity, is threatening his backbenchers with an election if they do not vote in favour of these emergency measures?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Emergency Measures Act provides for essential measures that can be used to put an end to these illegal blockades and to prevent another occupation.

Chiefs of police, security experts and municipal and provincial leaders told us that this act was essential for the operations being conducted by police.

I clearly indicated that these measures will only be applied if deemed necessary. These tools are being added to local resources. We will cancel these measures as soon as they are no longer necessary. That is the responsible way to manage the situation.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that was a lot of words, a lot of words and then a lot of words.

I listened carefully to the Prime Minister. It is not enough to tell Canadians to talk to each other. The Prime Minister needs to set an example.

When has he made an effort to listen to Canadians who do not think like him? Has he taken the time to call the member for Louis-Hébert? Is he forcing his members to vote in favour of these emergency measures? Will he call up and apologize to every single person he has insulted in recent weeks?

The Prime Minister needs to lead by example.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government and almost all Canadians have been there for each other from the very beginning of this pandemic. We have supported each other through tough times and we have been there for our small businesses, for our seniors and for our frontline workers. That is the story of the pandemic. That is not the story of those who are blockading the streets and preventing other Canadians from going to work or living in peace. This is the story of those who have been there for one another. These are the people we will continue focusing on. We will be working for the future on their behalf.

• (1425)

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, more than two weeks ago, the City of Ottawa requested 1,800 RCMP officers to ensure an adequate police response to the crisis. The events of last weekend proved that was indeed the solution. I would hope the Prime Minister was not even contemplating invoking the Emergencies Act two weeks ago.

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He will not invoke the act every time there is a protest—I hope he will resist that temptation—so is he now prepared to revoke the Emergencies Act?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the situation remains precarious across the country. We are very pleased with the work our police forces did this weekend in Ottawa and Gatineau to keep the people of the region and the national capital safe. We also saw interventions across the country to prevent more convoys from going to places where barricades could form. We must continue to be vigilant, but of course we all want to announce the end of these emergency measures as soon as we can. We will assess the feasibility of doing so on a daily basis.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I challenge the Prime Minister to name a single place in Canada or in Quebec where this law is warranted at this time. He spoke about tow trucks; that is about money. He spoke about freezing bank accounts. We should not be doing that for just two weeks. We should pass legislation and consider a permanent way to deal with criminal activities funded with the proceeds of crime.

Given that the Prime Minister himself has confirmed that this is a vote of confidence because he is afraid of his own caucus, should he not admit that this is the wrong way to go about it?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I greatly appreciate the commitment of the Leader of the Bloc Québécois to coming up with additional measures that we could debate in Parliament once the emergency has passed in order to ensure that our police forces and authorities all have the responsible and legitimate tools to address illegal occupations or crimes such as these. For the time being, we are still in a state of emergency, but I know that, like all Canadians, we want to see the end of these emergency measures as soon as possible. We will continue to monitor the situation closely.

* * *

[English]

COVID-19 PROTESTS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the occupation in Ottawa and the blockades of bridges and borders across Canada have had a severe impact on workers. We know that workers in Windsor, auto sector workers and workers in the downtown core of Ottawa, like those at the Rideau Centre and others, were severely impacted. They lost days and in some cases weeks of wages, which has made it even harder for them to put food on the table.

The government has announced a plan to support small businesses, but not a plan for workers. Where is the plan to support the workers who have been impacted by the occupation and the blockades?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. leader of the NDP for his support for workers. I agree with him on that.

We have continued every step of the way through the difficult past two years we have had to be there for small businesses, for seniors, for young people, for workers, and we will continue to do

that. We recognize that, on top of the pandemic context, this occupation and the blockades have been extremely difficult on businesses and workers. We are moving forward with measures to support them. This is something I think we can all agree on in this House, to be there for Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the occupation of Ottawa and the blockades at the border hit workers hard. It is getting more and more difficult for them to make ends meet. The Liberal government announced a plan to help the small businesses and the businesses affected by the blockades and the occupation, but not a plan for the workers.

Where is the plan to help the workers affected by the occupation of Ottawa and the blockades across the country?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the leader of the NDP for his commitment to our workers.

We share that concern. That is why for the past two years we have taken historic measures to support the workers, small businesses, seniors and families that are struggling because of this pandemic, and that is why we are committed to being there for the people who need it in the wake of the occupation of Ottawa.

Yes, we brought in a program for the businesses, but we will continue to look out for the workers as well.

* * *

● (1430)

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal member for Beaches—East York said today in the House, “I am not convinced that the emergency measures should [extend] beyond today. I would vote accordingly, but...it is now a confidence vote”.

It would seem that the Prime Minister is strong-arming his back bench and the NDP to vote in his favour by threatening an election. Is that not true?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think that we all breathed a sigh of relief at the phenomenal work that was done by law enforcement to bring order and peace outside these doors.

I look forward to the vote that is going to be taking place in just a few hours to have this House affirm the powers that were needed to ensure that peace and stability, and to make sure on a preventative basis that we do not see a return to that level of disorder.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the blockades have ended. Downtown Ottawa has been cleared. If there was ever a national emergency, which remains in doubt, it is over. There is no need for the Emergencies Act vote tonight. It would seem then that this vote tonight is about far more than the blockades and the protesters in downtown Ottawa. It would seem it is only about power, about the government having the power and setting the precedent for the bank accounts of political dissidents to be frozen.

Is that not right?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to just highlight how instrumental the Emergencies Act has been in allowing us to address, very effectively but in a manner that is consistent with the charter, the illegal blockades. I too want to take a moment to express my profound gratitude. I hope all members in the chamber will give thanks to the RCMP and all members of law enforcement who, in a very professional, measured and restrained manner, have restored order to the streets of Ottawa and have ensured we made progress at our borders.

We will only use the powers of the Emergencies Act as long as necessary.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it became clear this weekend that Canada did not need emergency measures to resolve the situation in Ottawa. Thousands of police officers from across Canada joined forces to resolve a specific situation. This is not the first time that has happened.

Nevertheless, this government still wants to impose the Emergencies Act, which has no place in this context, in our view. The border crossings were cleared without this legislation. The Ambassador Bridge was cleared without this legislation.

Why does the government stubbornly insist on implementing a law that Canadians do not want?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have seen significant progress in Ottawa over the past few days. Our borders and downtown Ottawa are free of blockades, and our borders are now open.

I want to thank the RCMP and all law enforcement agencies for their professional and measured response. The Emergencies Act was instrumental in making this possible, but we want to be done with it as soon as possible.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, back home in Quebec City we had protests over two weekends. We did not need the Emergencies Act. Instead, we saw the government and the police show leadership, the kind of leadership that has been sorely lacking in Ottawa in recent weeks.

Seven Canadian premiers, including the Premier of Quebec, want nothing to do with this act, but the government still wants to impose this extreme piece of legislation, which has never been used before this weekend.

Why is the government so insistent on doing this, given that the provincial premiers do not want it and neither do Canadians?

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Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I assure my colleague and all members in this House that any measures taken under the Emergencies Act have been taken in concert with all provincial and municipal authorities.

We will continue to work closely with the provinces and territories. Law enforcement is telling us that the act is a necessary tool, but we will withdraw these measures as soon as possible.

* * *

[English]

JUSTICE

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, has the government received a legal opinion from either the Attorney General or the Department of Justice as to whether the emergency powers granted under the Emergencies Act, particularly the power to freeze financial accounts, are consistent with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms? If so, will the government release the legal opinion to the House before this evening's vote?

● (1435)

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am confident as Attorney General that we have met the standard to apply the Emergencies Act. As we have stated on many occasions, we are required as a government that any measures we take will conform with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, including section 8 rights of search and seizure.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the justice minister or the finance minister.

First, how many bank accounts have been frozen under the authority of the emergency proclamation? Second, will the government commit that no further funds will be frozen without a court order verifying that a rational connection exists between the funds and the unlawful blockades? Third, will any currently frozen accounts for which a rational connection has not been demonstrated be released forthwith?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will say at the beginning that the RCMP has clarified that at no time did it provide any list of donors to banks for enforcement under the Emergencies Act.

With regard to those financial controls that are being exercised under the act, as we have said many times, those powers are being exercised in a manner that is consistent with the charter, including due process rights, as well as the right to be protected against any unreasonable search and seizure.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]***PUBLIC SAFETY**

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the occupation of Ottawa is over. There is not a single truck left in the streets, and the protesters have been dispersed. The police are in control of the situation and life is getting back to normal.

However, the House will vote tonight on invoking the Emergencies Act to address what the government is wrongly calling a “national crisis”.

Not only was there never a national crisis, there was no crisis at all. Will the Prime Minister immediately revoke his declaration about a state of emergency?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, although we have seen the progress made against the illegal blockades, threats remain.

The Emergencies Act will continue to play a critical role in ending the illegal blockades. We will follow the advice of the police and of other experts, who are telling us that the act is still necessary.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that is completely absurd. The Prime Minister wants us to vote in favour of special legislation when there are no trucks and no protesters in the streets of Ottawa to get rid of.

The Prime Minister has turned this into a no-confidence vote, so if we oppose it, it will trigger a second useless election in six months.

Even worse, what the Prime Minister is demanding means that, for the first time in history, the House of Commons will vote in favour of the use of the Emergencies Act to solve a problem that no longer exists.

Does the Prime Minister realize how low he is setting the bar and that he is creating a shameful precedent?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to my colleague, there are still risks, despite all the progress that has been made.

There are risks outside the House of Commons, in the streets of Ottawa, and at our borders. Efforts are being made to bring back the illegal blockades.

That is why, according to law enforcement, we still need the Emergencies Act. We will use this measure in a very responsible way, in compliance with the charter.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let us continue with this theatre of the absurd. Dozens of truckers who have left Ottawa have threatened to return as soon as possible.

How long does the Prime Minister plan to maintain the emergency measures? Will he keep them in place forever, even if there is no longer a crisis, just in case the truckers come back?

Seriously, what will it take for the government to realize that it was not the Emergencies Act that solved the crisis, but rather a co-

ordinated police response, which is what we have been calling for since day one?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important to understand how the act works. All the measures in the Emergencies Act, which were brought in by the declaration, are temporary, targeted and used in a way that is consistent with the charter.

We will withdraw the legislation as soon as possible. However, at the same time, we must follow the advice of the police.

* * *

● (1440)

*[English]***JUSTICE**

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the finance minister said at a press conference this morning, “For anyone who is concerned that their accounts may have been frozen because of their participation in these illegal blockades and occupation, the way to get your account unfrozen is to stop being part of the blockade and occupation.” The blockades have ended, but concerns over frozen accounts have not.

What mechanisms are in place today to help those who were accidentally caught in the government's dragnet?

Hon. Bill Blair (President of the Queen’s Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to be very clear, the RCMP issued a statement today clearly and unequivocally stating that they have not released the names of donors to the banks and are doing their job of targeting those individuals who are primarily responsible for this, including the people who parked their trucks illegally on the streets. Any Canadians who happens to have their accounts frozen by their bank should call their bank and find out why.

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Emergencies Act authorizes the freezing of bank accounts. Many Canadians know very little about the rules, the duration or the guidelines.

The legislation must not be trivialized. It is very troubling and, worse still, the Minister of Finance wants to introduce legislation to give more powers, without a warrant.

Will the minister commit to including a mechanism to appeal abusive decisions in order to protect honest Canadians?

[English]

Hon. Bill Blair (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the member that, first of all, there is nothing retroactive in the measures we have brought forward. They take effect on February 15. Anyone who, for example, made a donation to a cause prior to that date would not in any way be impacted by these measures. Additionally, there is, built right into the Emergencies Act, parliamentary scrutiny. It is subject to scrutiny by the House and by the other place. The concerns the member brings forward can be addressed quite appropriately within the existing act.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a financial crime expert says the Emergencies Act is a "serious [deviation] from the normal democratic processes". A U of T finance professor says, "Banks may be inclined to overreact...to avoid running afoul of the government". Security and finance experts say there are no suspicious activities or credible threats with protest-related donations. There is no evidence, court order or due process and no limits on what direct or indirect participation means.

It is already happening to my constituents, so when will frozen bank accounts be up and running again?

Hon. Bill Blair (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the integrated command team, which is composed of the Ottawa Police Service, the OPP and the RCMP, has been clear and unequivocal. The authorities that have been provided to them under the Emergencies Act have been essential to the progress they have made in getting the situation under control. We have also heard from the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, which is all the chiefs, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police and even the Canadian Police Association, representing the rank and file. All have been clear and unequivocal that these measures were essential and have been helping them restore order in this country.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while some MPs are claiming that the threats are now over, Canadians are still living with the impacts of the ongoing convoy crisis. In B.C., the Pacific Highway crossing had to be preemptively closed this weekend, blocking commuters, essential workers and goods. The RCMP arrested 16 people, while other unlawful activity could not be addressed on the spot due to lack of resources.

After weeks of failed leadership from the government, will the minister assure Canadians that it is now acting with the urgency needed?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for highlighting one of the ongoing risks we face, which is the threat to our borders and our trade corridors. They are so critically important to keeping Canadians at work and our economy rolling. That is why we continue to listen very carefully to the advice we are getting from our police services, which say that the Emergencies Act was instrumental in

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addressing the blockades at ports of entry and continues to be instrumental in preventing them.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what happened in Coutts, Alberta, is unprecedented. The Conservatives are downplaying the severity of what is happening and are pretending that the threat is over.

There was a plot to murder RCMP officers by dangerous extremists. Millions of dollars are still coming in from foreign sources to fund these hate groups—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

● (1445)

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I have the volume as far up as I can, and I am not hearing the question. Let us keep it to a relative roar when members are asking a question.

The member for Edmonton Strathcona.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, what happened in Coutts, Alberta, is unprecedented. The Conservatives in the House are downplaying the severity of what is happening and are pretending that the threat is over.

There was a plot to murder RCMP officers by dangerous extremists. Millions of dollars are still coming in from foreign sources to fund these hate groups. When will the government bring forward legislation to halt all—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I share the concerns of my hon. colleague around the severity of the charges that were laid in Coutts, including conspiracy to commit murder. Of course, hon. colleagues will recognize that it would be inappropriate for us to comment on ongoing matters that are now before the courts. I also share the member's concern around the rhetoric and extremism that we have seen not only in Alberta but right across the country, which has motivated some of the individuals.

We need to be vigilant about that. We need to be sure that we deal with those threats. That is one of the reasons the Emergencies Act is there to help protect the health and safety of Canadians.

Mr. Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the last three weeks have been extraordinarily difficult for the people of Ottawa, with major roads blocked, noise at all hours of the night and people threatened and intimidated in their own communities. Despite the severe economic impacts of the last two years, downtown businesses were forced to shut their doors yet again. This past weekend, we saw police execute a coordinated plan that finally removed demonstrators and their vehicles from Ottawa streets. This only came after the federal government invoked the Emergencies Act for the very first time in our nation's history.

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Can the Minister of Emergency Preparedness explain to the House why the act was needed to bring the situation to an end?

Hon. Bill Blair (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the actions of the illegal blockaders at our critical infrastructure, at central trade corridors and even here on the streets of our nation's capital were causing great and lasting harm to our country, to our economy and to our citizens. This was clearly and unequivocally an emergency that required extraordinary measures to restore the rule of law, to protect public safety and to protect Canadian interests and infrastructure.

I want to lend my voice to my government in a word of thanks to our law enforcement officials, who did the job we needed them to do and have protected our interests.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are at a point in time in Canadian history that I never thought we would reach. Canadians in the nation's capital are seeing fences put up around the streets and police checkpoints at every intersection, and some Canadians are mistakenly having their bank accounts frozen. Tonight, in this chamber, every single member of Parliament will have to rise and say if they agree that this is a Canada they want for their kids and grandchildren.

My question is for the Prime Minister. How did he convince the federal NDP to sell out the core beliefs of Jack Layton and Tommy Douglas?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the member that all of the powers being used under the Emergencies Act are being used in a manner that is very proportional, measured and respectful of the charter, including protections around due process and the right to be protected from unreasonable search and seizure.

We are always reassessing the need for the Emergencies Act. We are listening very carefully to the advice we are receiving from law enforcement. I want to assure the member and all members of the chamber that we will absolutely retreat from the Emergencies Act as soon as we can.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister does not get it. Canadians do not trust him and his government.

We have a historic vote this evening. The Liberals have desperately tried to justify the Prime Minister's power grab and overreach. We see the leader of the NDP bending over backwards to prop up the most corrupt government in Canadian history.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Warren Steinley: To the Prime Minister, on top of the—

The Deputy Speaker: I heard the word “corrupt”. Maybe the member can rephrase.

The hon. member for Regina—Lewvan.

Mr. Warren Steinley: We have seen the NDP leader back up the most scandalous government we have seen throughout the history of our country.

To the Prime Minister, on top of the cost of our freedom in his new Liberal emergency state, when will we see the celebration of the Liberal's official coalition with the NDP, with the swearing in of a minister? Perhaps next—

• (1450)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Hon. Bill Blair (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what we have seen is another reversal: A party that once tried to characterize itself as a party of law and order has now abandoned all pretext of supporting law and order in this country.

We have heard unequivocally from the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, from the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, from the police rank and file and from the police commanders who are restoring peace and order to our city that these measures are necessary and appropriate. Frankly, we are used to the flip-flops, but this one is extraordinary.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the trucks outside are gone. The protests are over. There are no more blockades. However, the Prime Minister is still determined to punish those involved under the Emergencies Act, where there is no due process to protect the innocent. Worse yet, he does this with the NDP's support.

When did the Prime Minister lose all respect for the charter and when did the NDP lose their way?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague has now heard on several occasions, the tools we are using under the Emergencies Act are very practical, very targeted and very measured. We are talking about designating secure zones. We are talking about choking off illegal funds that could be used to aid and abet the illegal blockades. We are talking about rapidly deploying the RCMP so that we can restore public safety here in Ottawa. It is all of these things.

The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police has supported this. The Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police has supported it. The Canadian Police Association, which is for the rank and file of police and frontline responders day in and day out, supports the Emergencies Act.

When will the party of law and order actually support the opinions of the law and order?

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this party does not support the Charter of Rights. It also does not seem to understand that continued use of the Emergencies Act for the Prime Minister's political purposes will only further divide Canadians. Former NDP MP Svend Robinson said that a very dangerous precedent is being set.

Why has the Prime Minister not rescinded these emergency powers today?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the short answer is because we are listening to law enforcement, who have given us a very considered view that threats remain to our communities here in Ottawa and to the neighbourhoods here in Ottawa, which have for far too long been under siege. We are listening to law enforcement about the threats that remain at our borders, where trade corridors and supply chains are vital to the Canadian economy and to keeping Canadians at work. That is why we continue to use the Emergencies Act, but we are doing it in a responsible, measured way, consistent with the charter. We will sunset the Emergencies Act as soon as we can.

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[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, tensions are escalating again between Russia and Ukraine. Armed conflict is imminent.

Let us look at the evidence. Even though no Russian soldier has set foot in Ukraine yet, the country is already under attack. For weeks, the Government of Canada has been claiming it will impose harsh sanctions against Russia in the event of an invasion. The attack has started, and Ukraine needs support from its allies now, not once it is too late.

Will the government immediately issue preventive sanctions to dissuade Moscow from taking action?

[English]

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, we are indeed ready to impose severe economic sanctions should Russia further invade Ukraine, an invasion that has been going on for many years. We are working closely with allies: the U.S., the U.K. and the EU. Sanctions are always most effective when they are done in lockstep with other countries. That is exactly what we do as we stand with the Ukrainian people and with Ukraine.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Ukraine is calling on its allies to impose sanctions immediately.

Moscow has already announced that it recognizes the independence of the Donbass territories, which is the first step toward annexing them. Ukraine is already experiencing cyber-attacks, a naval blockade, military pressure, and a disinformation campaign seeking to justify an invasion.

Last week, the Minister of Foreign Affairs said that the sanctions will come into effect on day one of an attack.

The attack has started. Will Canada fire a warning shot and immediately impose sanctions against Moscow?

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada remains steadfast in its support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

We strongly condemn Russia's decision to recognize the regions of Donetsk and Luhansk in Ukraine. This is a serious violation of

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the Minsk agreements and article 2, paragraph 4, of the United Nations Charter, and a threat to the security and stability of the region.

* * *

● (1455)

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are not easily fooled, and even the Prime Minister's caucus is growing increasingly nervous about his reckless governance.

The Prime Minister claims he has no other choice but to invoke emergency measures. Today, he is turning this into a confidence issue for his own caucus. The emergency measures constitute a precedent that must not be taken lightly. What is more, the Prime Minister is telling us that these measures will be maintained for three months as a precaution.

Is he telling us that he will invoke emergency measures every time his leadership is in crisis?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since the illegal blockades started, the government has taken many concrete measures, such as giving police forces extra resources.

At the same time, the Emergencies Act continues to be necessary to help police prevent further illegal blockades. We want to sunset the act as soon as we can.

[English]

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Parliament Hill is now cleared. Most of the charges in Ottawa involve trespassing and mischief. Tow truck operators were already compelled to help authorities before the Emergencies Act. Our borders were cleared prior to the law, which has never been used before, was activated. Organizations such as the Canadian Civil Liberties Association tell us that the government is not limiting the act to just Ottawa. It applies universally across the country. It does not target just one specific protest. It applies to every single Canadian.

Going forward, how often does the Prime Minister plan to use this tool of last resort as a tool of first resort?

Hon. Bill Blair (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think even the member opposite would acknowledge that, when we see the type of criminality that was taking place on the streets of Ottawa, and when we see the attacks on our critical infrastructure and the cutting off of vital supply lines into this country, it constitutes an emergency because of the harm committed against our country and our citizens.

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We are prepared to do what is required. We are working very closely with law enforcement, who have the important task of restoring the rule of law to our streets, protecting our citizens and our critical infrastructure. We will only use those measures as long as they are required.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Emergencies Act is intended to be a last resort to deal with a clear, imminent threat. It is not a sledgehammer to deal with some future unknown crisis. There is no security threat. The streets are empty and the blockades are gone. There is no threat to our democracy. We are here in the House of Commons, with the world watching, about to have a critical vote.

If there is no threat, will the Prime Minister end his abuse of the Emergencies Act, or is this just a ploy to ensure that the infringements on Canadians' charter rights and our bank accounts are permanent?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had hoped that the member would have seen over the course of the last number of days that this is far from using a sledgehammer. The police have shown restraint. They have been patient, and they have been professional in carrying out their responsibilities under the Emergencies Act, which they continue to say is necessary to bring about the end of the illegal occupation here in Ottawa and across the country.

There are still risks, but I assure every member in this House that we will sunset the Emergencies Act as soon as we can and, in the meantime, the powers exercised under it will be done in a manner consistent with the charter.

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for the last three weeks, law enforcement partners have been coordinating their efforts to end illegal blockades and disruptions in Ottawa and at border crossings. The RCMP have assisted municipal and provincial forces when requested, helping to stop unlawful protesters and restoring the freedoms and livelihoods of all Canadians.

Why is the continued use of the Emergencies Act necessary to ensure Canadians' livelihood and quality of life are protected?

• (1500)

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for all of his hard work in representing his community. He will know why the Emergencies Act continues to be necessary. In Surrey at the Pacific Highway, we saw a recent effort to once again obstruct trade corridors, which has a direct and significant impact on the economy and on Canadian jobs.

I know that is a central concern for the hon. colleague. I hope it is for all members in this chamber. I hope that tonight everyone will see fit to support the passage of the Emergencies Act, so we can end the illegal blockades, and so we can get life back to normal as quickly as possible.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I asked a serious question earlier, which the Attorney General did not answer. I asked whether or not the Attorney General or the Department of Justice had rendered a legal opinion regarding

the public order emergency powers and the charter. Surely his answer to my question was not the sum total of that legal opinion, if it exists. Therefore, I will ask the question again. Is there a legal opinion, yes or no? If there is, will the government release it to the House ahead of this evening's vote?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member was a lawyer he would understand that I would not answer that question. I speak as the Attorney General for the Government of Canada. In giving my legal opinion, I have assured this House, and I have assured the Canadian public, that I feel that we have met the legal standards based on the decision and that—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: I can stand here all day and wait for everybody to come to order to bring the temperature down a bit.

I know the Minister of Justice was trying to answer the question. I will give him 10 seconds to finish up.

The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Hon. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, the reason why, as an Attorney General, one never discloses whether or not one has an opinion is because that could be construed as giving consent to divulge that opinion. It is covered by solicitor-client privilege, and it will remain so.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is an example of a failure of leadership.

Legal experts, civil liberties organizations and many others are sounding the alarm, stating that emergency legislation should not be normalized, that it threatens our democracy and charter liberties.

With the support of the NDP, the federal government is ordering financial institutions to freeze the bank accounts of Canadians who do not agree with it. Why are the Liberals and the NDP so willing to trample over the rights of the citizens they represent?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since the outset, we have been very transparent with Canadians about the reasons why we have invoked the Emergencies Act. There has been a very vigorous debate in this chamber about why, in the government's view, we meet the test under the Emergencies Act.

I assure my hon. colleague that all of the powers that are being exercised in it are being done in a responsible, measured and proportionate manner that is consistent with existing provincial and municipal authorities, and we will sunset the Emergencies Act as soon as we can. In the meantime, we will work with law enforcement to restore public order and public safety.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was a legislative assistant here in the 1980s. I knew the legendary NDP co-founder Stanley Knowles, who was elected 13 times as the member for Winnipeg North Centre.

In the 1970 debate invoking the war measures act, Mr. Knowles said, “we have to work very hard to show that in our kind of society we still think there is a better way...to deal with ideas that we do not [agree with].”

Why did the NDP coalition not listen to the sage words of Mr. Knowles before implementing the act?

Hon. Bill Blair (President of the Queen’s Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, although I appreciate the member’s newfound New Democratic viewpoints, let me say this: The Emergencies Act is not the war measures act. A Progressive Conservative government, back when the Conservatives called themselves progressives, brought in this legislation, which was charter compliant and respected the rights of all citizens and every freedom contained within the charter.

It is a carefully crafted law, a law that we have complied with throughout. In articulating our reasons for bringing this forward, I think even Mr. Knowles would recognize that what has been happening on our streets and at our borders constitutes an emergency that required—

• (1505)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle.

[Translation]

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, by invoking the Emergencies Act, this government has ensured that law enforcement agencies have the tools they need to dismantle illegal blockades and clear the occupation. We heard directly from experts and law enforcement agencies how these tools were used to do exactly that.

Can the minister update the House on how the financial measures continue to play a vital role in putting an end to the illegal protests and letting Canadians get back to their normal lives?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question and all her hard work.

Over the past few days, we have seen significant progress in Ottawa and at our borders. Downtown Ottawa is free of blockades, and our borders are open. I want to thank the RCMP and all police forces for their good work.

All the measures mentioned in the Emergencies Act are very practical, very targeted and temporary. They were all implemented in accordance with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The government will sunset the Emergencies Act as soon as possible.

[English]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Ambassador Bridge blockade cost over \$1 billion in economic losses. The bridge is now open, but new barricades are blocking local business. We have cancellations of doctor and health appointments and continued job losses. Since the Emergencies Act started, further convoys have been turned back and resources have been invested to

protect this national route, even when we just recently faced a bomb threat.

The government has offered support for Ottawa businesses affected by the occupation, and that is good. Will this government ensure that it is helping all the border municipalities and the workers who were harmed by the convoy crisis, because it still carries on?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Windsor West for his advocacy and hard work in representing his constituents. We have maintained very open lines of communication during the illegal blockades. The member highlights why it is that the Emergencies Act continues to be necessary given the risks in Windsor, Coutts and other ports of entry, such as Surrey.

We are going to work very closely with my hon. colleague, the hon. colleague for Windsor—Tecumseh and the mayor of Windsor to ensure that small businesses have all the supports they need so we can get the economy going again. Notwithstanding the challenges of the illegal blockades, this government will be there for those impacted by them.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, as hon. colleagues will know, from the beginning I have been very concerned that the regulations appear overly broad and not connected to the declaration itself. I want to ask the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada if he is satisfied, and if he can satisfy me, that the declaration is tied to these regulations, and that they cannot be used for anything other than for the specific emergency as described in the declaration.

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the way in which the regulations for orders are based in the declaration, as well as the way in which they are written, clearly indicate that they flow from the declaration. Therefore, I can assure the hon. member, and I can assure Canadians, that the regulations for orders can only be used for combatting this particular emergency and no other situation.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

GREEN MUNICIPAL FUND

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to standing Order 32(2), I have the pleasure to table, in both official languages, the 2020-21 annual report for the green municipal fund, “Forward Together”.

Statutory Order

• (1510)

*[Translation]***COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

[English]

The committee advised that, pursuant to Standing Order 91.1(2), the Subcommittee on Private Members' Business met to consider the items added to the order of precedence on February 9 and February 11, 2022, as well as the orders for the second reading of private members' public bills originating in the Senate, and recommended that the items listed herein, which it has determined should not be designated not votable, be considered by the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 91.1(2), the report is deemed adopted.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

QUEEN JULIANA PARK

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): No opportunity wasted, Mr. Speaker, I have a petition.

This petition is on behalf of very concerned and increasingly desperate citizens of Ottawa who are concerned that 750 mature canopy trees at Queen Juliana Park in this city will be destroyed and removed to put in a parking lot, and that the National Capital Commission's recommendation to use a different location for the much-needed expansion of the new Ottawa Hospital, which they recommended should go to Tunney's Pasture, was reversed without proper process.

The petitioners specifically and concisely call to restore the National Capital Commission's initial recommendation, to preserve Queen Juliana Park and the entire Central Experimental Farm as green spaces, and in this pandemic we know how much we need to get outdoors and into green spaces, and to support the panel's request for a public inquiry.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all questions be allowed to stand at this time.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY*[English]***EMERGENCIES ACT**

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Huron—Bruce has six minutes remaining in his speech.

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when I left off I was talking about 2010 and the G20. No situation is the same and we all know that, but if we go back to that time, the protest lasted over a week. There were 1,100 people arrested and there was a lot of destruction. Those of us who are old enough can remember that.

In my point before, I was not knocking the former chief of police, who is now the Minister of Emergency Preparedness. I was just stating the fact that he was the chief. When the member for Oxford and I were on the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, he appeared there and explained all the intricacies of the operation and all the dealings they had. My point was that he does not say now that they should have used it. He never said once that in reflection he should have used it. That time, using those images and what was going on, would be a lot closer to the test than what we are dealing with here. I think that is what the member for Oxford was saying as well.

There was an issue here in Ottawa about a year and a half ago on Elgin Street right in front of the police station. Again, I am not saying every situation is the same. I am not saying that. Each one is different and has different levels of risk, but it is an example of where the lower part of Elgin Street was shut down by over 100 protesters who were very inspired by what they were protesting. It was a multi-day shutdown of Elgin. At no time did the mayor of Ottawa or the police chief go to the government and say that they needed to bring this act in to shut those people down. Whether people think it is right or wrong, they went in at three in the morning on a Saturday and dealt with the blockade.

There have been protests and blockades around this country all the time since this act was enacted in the eighties, and it has never been used. We heard all sorts of examples of this. That is why I think it is so important for the City of Ottawa to do an inquiry. It has 1,500 uniformed men and women and over 600 civilians employed within the police service. They are good people.

At the leadership level, at the city level, something went wrong. They knew for weeks the truckers were coming here. They knew for weeks that trucks were coming. I had calls from people saying there was going to be 10,000 trucks here and asking what the city was going to do. The leadership would have had way more intel than I obviously would have had.

Again, I am not criticizing the city or the mayor, I am just asking what they did. We do not know. That is why they need to have an inquiry. The committee is fine, but there also needs to be something a little more in-depth than that, and possibly an inquiry at the federal level as well to figure out why this was done and where the breakdown happened.

We heard about the Ambassador Bridge at length, and it was cleared. The Blue Water Bridge was cleared. It was a multi-jurisdictional unit that worked at it with the Windsor Police Service, the OPP and the RCMP. The OPP, the RCMP, the police services in the cities and the regional police, like Peel, Durham and York, work together all the time. It is not some bureaucratic nightmare like some of the Liberal members of Parliament talk about. They work together all the time.

The other thing I would like to talk about, and it was brought up in question period and many other times, has to do with the charter, specifically the seizure and freezing of bank accounts and whether that happened or not. We have to be honest, the Minister of Finance has been very unclear. Even in question period today, Liberals used very smart words. They say things like “the RCMP never”, but if we look at the act, the power is given to the banks.

These ministers are picking their words very carefully. That is where I think they really crossed the line with Canadians. It is scary to think someone might be getting their bank account frozen and may be targeted. This is an overreach. When it is all over and done with, there could be some lawsuits and payouts because there was an overreach. If we look at the G20, there was over \$15 million paid out.

● (1515)

The other thing I will say is that there has been a tremendous focus on this issue. Ukraine and Russia have been a tremendous focus, but the biggest thing the Liberals do not want to focus on are the issues with the economy, the issues around people's pay cheques, the inflation around how much it costs to live. Every time we fill our cars, it is \$1.55 or \$1.60 a litre. These are things the Liberals are desperate not to talk about. They will talk about everything else but that.

The sooner we can, let us get beyond this, lift the mandates, unite this country and get back to being one of the best. I look forward to that and I am sure most members of Parliament look forward to that as well.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of the convoy, the organizers were very clear. They said it was about overthrowing the government by staying in Ottawa until all the mandates had been lifted. That was the organizational group and the types of things they were telling Canadians.

I understand that there are possibly dozens of Conservative members of Parliament who have donated to this convoy cause. I am wondering if the member would agree that donating to those sorts of stated objectives might be somewhat of a conflict. Is that maybe why the Conservatives do not want to vote for the Emergencies Act? Would it be self-serving? Are these not questions that need to be answered and maybe should be a part of the inquiry and what happens afterwards?

Mr. Ben Lobb: Mr. Speaker, because Adam Vaughan tweets it, it does not make it true. If the member wants to go outside that door and read those names off, I am sure there will be many lawyers calling him this week. I guarantee that.

Statutory Order

The other thing I will say to that member, who I have known a long time, is that, if he knew, what did he do four weeks ago? Nothing. What did the Minister of Public Safety do? Nothing. What did the Minister of Justice do? Nothing. What did the mayor of Ottawa do? Nothing. They welcomed them in on a red carpet, so we do not need any of your lectures.

● (1520)

The Deputy Speaker: We are getting into debate again and I want to make sure that members run everything through the Chair and not necessarily going straight to another member.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I am sure the hon. member for Huron—Bruce does not want to take you outside behind the wood shed. It had that feeling to it. I am sure we want to make sure we address our comments through the Chair and not at the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: We are getting really late in the day and I know we just finished question period, so there is still a lot of energy floating around.

The hon. member for Montcalm.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, during question period, the Minister of Emergency Preparedness said that he wanted to restore the rule of law. However, following the rule of law involves meeting the criteria required to invoke the Emergencies Act.

The government failed to do that, but it still talking about restoring the rule of law. Does my Conservative colleague not think that the government is basically just living by the old adage of “do as I say, not as I do”?

[*English*]

Mr. Ben Lobb: Mr. Speaker, that is what the Prime Minister's mantra has been the whole time since he has been in. What I would ask is what this act is trying to do that the police cannot already do. The police are doing it. There are at least ten thousand police officers in this country and they are working every day to keep our streets as safe as they can. What is the act doing? It really does not do anything except put fear into Canadians.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we know that prominent Republicans in the U.S. have voiced their support for this illegal occupation, including Donald Trump. Ottawa Police Service noted concerns over the significant amount of foreign funding supporting the convoy. Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton criticized GoFundMe's decision to block the remaining funding, saying that they “failed to deliver Texans’ money”.

This seems like international interference. Is my colleague as concerned as I am about the foreign funding that has funded and fuelled this illegal occupation, which literally brought—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Huron—Bruce.

Statutory Order

Mr. Ben Lobb: Mr. Speaker, I have not seen the list, so I would not know, but how about the Tides Foundation and all of the different groups that have been operating for years on foreign dollars? Members of Parliament have never said a word. If there are foreign dollars, I do not think any of them were allocated, but the point is that this practice needs to be put to an end anyway. If people want to protest, they should do it with Canadian dollars and do it legally and peacefully.

The bottom line here is that it is about federal mandates that do not make any sense and do not keep Canadians safe. An unvaccinated truck driver driving down the I-95 or the I-75 poses no risk to society. That is the bottom line.

[Translation]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Jonquière.

I want to begin by saying that I did not walk down the street in front of Parliament waving a Canadian flag. I did not block the street by parking my car in the middle of it. I have never agreed with the people who decided to occupy the city. However, even though I did not agree with them and I felt it was important to follow the public health guidelines, I still think that invoking the Emergencies Act is an extreme move for this government to take.

I am sad today. I am sad because we are in a situation of extreme polarization. We are wondering how we got to this point. We might say that the COVID-19 pandemic played a role. We might also be wondering whether the government did anything to try to reduce this polarization. I do not think it did.

It is unfortunate, because the government let a bad situation drag on without addressing it. As the saying goes, the longer we wait, the worse things will get. The government did nothing to address the situation when the protesters set up across the street. Instead of trying to ease tensions and find ways to de-escalate the situation, it decided to add fuel to the fire. I think it did this because it was politically advantageous.

These people across the street were there to express their frustration. They were there to say that they are tired of the health measures. We understand. I too am tired of the health measures, but I also recognize that we need to live with and continue following these measures until they can all be lifted.

The government had a different view, however. It chose to vilify the protesters, as though it were us against them. It wanted to keep adding fuel to the fire because it was politically advantageous. We saw how that played out. Instead of showing empathy, the government chose to insult these people by doing absolutely nothing and not even trying to put an end to what was happening.

This worked in the beginning, because the leader of the Conservatives ended up leaving. The Conservatives were caught up with their own issues, having had their contradictions exposed. No one could really figure out if they were for or against the health measures. No one could tell whether they were for or against the convoy of protesters. Some were opposed, while others supported it. It was a tough time for the Conservatives as political foes.

What did the government end up doing? More nothing. It washed its hands of the whole thing and allowed the situation to deteriorate, knowing it would throw the Conservatives into turmoil. The sad thing is that the government's role is not to just stand by and be partisan. Contrary to what we have seen, it should not be partisan at all. This government adopted a partisan approach instead of dealing with a situation and improving social cohesion so we can all get along better and more forward as a society. That is the problem.

Then the government skipped a few steps. After washing its hands of the whole thing, it suddenly found itself in the spotlight. Everyone was wondering how it was possible that people could settle in for weeks with no response from the other side and why the government was just hurling insults at these people without really trying to resolve the impasse. That is what we saw.

It seemed to me that, by choosing to play with fire, the government was running the risk of getting burned. Its lack of leadership was obvious. Then the pyromaniac decided to pass itself off as a firefighter. It decided to pretend it was taking action and looking for a way to end the situation. It decided to invoke the Emergencies Act.

The Premier of Quebec did not want it. The National Assembly unanimously voted against it. Seven out of 10 provinces said they did not want it, and that is kind of a big deal. When all those stakeholders are telling the federal government it is going too far, it seems to me the government should be able to read the room, listen to people and find some other way to address the issues.

• (1525)

We proposed a solution to the government. We asked it not to apply the act in Quebec or to apply it only in specific areas. The government was not interested because it wanted to play politics with the Emergencies Act. It was so urgent that the government sat on its hands for weeks and did not try to resolve the situation.

Quebec had protests too. They were handled, and the situation went back to normal. A bridge was blocked, but then it was unblocked without the use of emergency measures. It seems as though Ottawa simply lacked the will.

Many critics spoke of a "health dictatorship". I obviously disagree, but, by invoking the Emergencies Act, the Liberals kind of gave them a leg to stand on. The member for Louis-Hébert recently went so far as to say that he was uncomfortable with his government's decisions and positions because it was politicizing the pandemic. Earlier today, we learned that member is not alone. Other members within the Liberal ranks feel the same way.

As my colleague from Mirabel noted, the government knows it is in trouble. Members of its own caucus are challenging its actions. MPs in the House are challenging its actions. To us, it looks like things are not going well for either the Liberals or the Conservatives. The NDP is on the fence; nobody knows yet. It has been very hard to understand that party's position lately.

The government said it was prepared to use strong-arm tactics to ensure success. Maybe it went too far, but it will never admit that. Maybe there are people on the inside who felt that way. The government decided to make this a confidence vote. Maybe it thinks people will be afraid of triggering an election, so they will toe the line and it can say it was right all along. My colleague from Mirabel shared a very interesting analysis. He said the government had decided to change this from a vote of conscience, which would have allowed people to do their own analysis of the situation and vote in accordance with their real, sincere thoughts and feelings about it, to a confidence vote.

That is an excellent explanation of what happened every step of the way. Every time the government had an opportunity to do the right thing and make the right decisions, it opted to politicize things instead. I really do not get it. The only thing the government managed to do since the start of the protest that became an occupation was haul out the nuclear option, the Emergencies Act, a law that has not been used since 1988, the year I was born. We got through all kinds of crisis situations, but not this one. This one was impossible. The government could not handle it. A few hundred people parked in front of Parliament, and the situation was out of control. The government could not deal with it. That surprises me.

I am not saying extremist elements were not present. I am not saying it was not dangerous. What I am saying is that the government let things go. The government did nothing at all. That is shameful. It tried to persuade us by forcing our hand, but the truth is it was not very persuasive.

Had the government managed to persuade us, to prove that this act was indeed necessary, then why are we still debating it when it has been in effect for seven days already?

Even this morning, it was not clear whether the government would be able to get a majority to adopt the motion. It has been a tough road. We can see that the government is not in control of the situation, even after dropping the nuclear option that is the Emergencies Act.

I want to extend an invitation to all members of the House. When it comes time to vote later, rather than voting under threat, rather than voting with a gun to our heads—because the government is always trying to push the envelope and polarize and politicize the situation—I invite them to vote according to their conscience and to ask themselves whether it was worth it.

Is invoking the Emergencies Act absolutely necessary?

We do not think so.

• (1530)

[English]

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member and his party need to pick a lane. On the one

hand, he is saying we should have stepped in sooner, that we should have been proactive, that we should have gone in without any invitation from the provinces to deal with this. On the other hand, he says that Quebec does not need the federal government.

Did we step in without Quebec's request to help out in long-term care homes? No, we did not. We waited until Quebec asked us.

Would the hon. member not believe that is actually the way we would proceed in this circumstance, that if Quebec asked us to help with the Emergencies Act, he would recognize that and welcome it?

• (1535)

[Translation]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Mr. Speaker, I am a bit disappointed in the question from my colleague.

I have the impression that this debate on the Emergencies Act, which is a serious, important piece of legislation with far-reaching consequences when it is invoked, is being used as an opportunity to do some Quebec bashing. That is unacceptable.

I will not answer his question because, personally, I think it is below the belt.

[English]

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this crisis started on January 7. The government knew about it for six weeks, but all of a sudden, it was an emergency.

Is the hon. member convinced that the government is not doing this for any other reason than a power grab?

[Translation]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Mr. Speaker, to answer my colleague's question, for some reason, the government sat on its hands throughout the entire crisis. It did not do a single thing. It did not lift a finger.

Instead, the Prime Minister insulted the protesters and hid in his basement. At some point, he woke up. Suddenly it became urgent to bring in the Emergencies Act to resolve the situation.

It seems like he tried to save face instead of truly trying to resolve the situation.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. He raised some important points. However, does he not recognize that despite the fact that the streets of Ottawa are calmer today, some real threats remain?

There are two places near the capital where truckers are waiting. There are also truckers who have been stopped with a convoy at the Pacific Highway border crossing in British Columbia. This is not over.

Statutory Order

Does my colleague not believe that being able to freeze bank accounts that are funding these illegal occupations is a good thing for preventing money from Donald Trump supporters and the United States from flowing in and being used to organize these sieges and protests?

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Mr. Speaker, my response to the member is that when we look at Wellington Street and elsewhere around the country at this time, we can see that all is quiet.

Do we still need the police to continue their work? Yes, certainly.

Do we need to continue to be vigilant with respect to foreign influence? Yes, certainly.

However, personally, I do not feel particularly threatened at this time, and I am not convinced that ordinary folks, who are at home right now, are feeling particularly threatened.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Emergencies Act was a mistake from the get-go, and the government knows it.

Today, now that the dust has settled in Ottawa, it is even more of a mistake. Despite all that, the Prime Minister has decided to turn tonight's motion into a vote of confidence. That makes no sense. Why decide to make it a vote of confidence?

Is it to silence his own caucus, because some of its members are asking themselves serious questions, or is it to muzzle the NDP?

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Mr. Speaker, that is a very good question. With respect to the Liberal caucus, we may find out in a few years. When people write their memoirs 10, 15 or 20 years later, we often discover things.

We already know that at least three members are not very comfortable with the position of their own government. We also know that, until this morning, the NDP was not very comfortable with the government's position.

Magically, after the government decided to make this a vote of confidence, the NDP bolstered its support. It was unclear previously. I have the impression that the NDP's change in position has something to do with the threat of a vote of confidence.

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will not be sharing my time because I am selfish.

How should we tackle this matter? Yesterday, I asked myself how I would start my speech, and I thought that the best way would be to examine the issue of this law's legitimacy. In my opinion, this entails establishing how a free society works. All too often, when we speak of free societies, we make the mistake of believing that a democratic society, a free society, is a society that lives consensually. That is not the case.

I recommend that everyone read *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy* by Jacques Rancière, who is probably one of the foremost figures in French political philosophy. In this work, Jacques Rancière says that politics exist as soon as the “sans-part”, those who are excluded, want to have a part in society. That is what we see in class conflict, the feminist movement and the movement of homosexuals who want to be recognized. They are the “sans-part” who

want to have a part in society. That is the only way the democratic process functions.

I was looking for a quote this week because the notion of freedom has been the focus of our debates. I was looking for a quote that would give a positive definition of freedom, and I thought of my loyal listener, the member for Lac-Saint-Jean, who got into a little tiff with the member for Carleton on Bill C-8, a bill to implement certain budgetary measures.

During this exchange, the member for Carleton started preaching about freedom. Since he aspires to become the leader of the Conservative Party, his motivations might be different from others'. He finished his speech talking about the protesters and said “Freedom is on the march.” Since my colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean is a clever guy, he quickly pointed out that the member was off topic and his speech had absolutely nothing to do with Bill C-8. The member for Carleton replied that freedom is never pertinent to the Bloc, which I thought was a little harsh.

I thought it would be appropriate to teach the member for Carleton the definition of freedom and the type of freedom he is talking about. I think this is relevant to today's debate.

I am going to share a quote from Jan Patočka, a modern Socratic philosopher. Jan Patočka died in 1977 following an intense interrogation that went wrong. He was an old man, a philosopher and spiritual advisor to Vaclav Havel, the first president of the Czech Republic.

In a book entitled *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, Jan Patočka wrote:

“[P]olitics is always of another order than economic management or the projection of humans in work...politics is nothing other than life for the sake of freedom, not life for the sake of survival or even for well being”.

What does Jan Patočka mean by “life for the sake of freedom”?

For me, it is quite simple, and this goes back to Rancière. Life for the sake of freedom means that people are willing to challenge the established rules in order to be recognized. Patočka even died challenging the Iron Curtain regime to see the Czech regime recognized. These are people willing to pay a very heavy price. I am not sure if my colleague from Carleton would be willing to pay such a price, but at the very least, if we now follow this line of thought, we should distinguish between two types of freedom.

There is the freedom that people seek to win, the kind that people are willing to fight for.

However, there is another very basic freedom, as Isaiah Berlin presents in *Liberty*. It is the best illustration possible.

In *Liberty*, Isaiah Berlin refers to two types of liberty: positive liberty and negative liberty. According to Isaiah Berlin, positive liberty is the freedom that allows individuals to live their lives the way they choose.

It is possible for individuals in a society to feel that they are being treated unjustly. This has happened in history, especially to women in patriarchal societies. It has happened to ethnic minorities, and it has happened to a national minority, Quebecers. We believe that we have suffered an offence, we want to change the course of society, we engage in a struggle, and we undertake social actions in an attempt to define ourselves. This is what Isaiah Berlin called positive liberty. But Isaiah Berlin also discussed negative liberty.

● (1540)

Perhaps the best way to understand negative liberty is to look at a sentence by Dostoevsky in *The Possessed*. In this novel, Dostoevski, through the voice of Stavrogin, said, "If God does not exist, everything is permitted." Let us leave God aside. What Dostoevsky meant is that if there are no institutions, then everything is permitted. If there is no legitimate and well-established authority, then everything is permitted.

Negative liberty therefore means that not everything is permitted. Governments are in place for that. We have principles of political associations, a Constitution that tells us that not everything is permitted. I may not do everything that I want; I may not limit the freedom of others. Therefore, this "everything" is not permitted. Ultimately, negative liberty is a bit like government action.

How are men to be made free? The one who came up with the best answer was certainly Camus. He said that it was through rebellion.

I will read a quote from Camus's novel *The Rebel*. Afterwards, we will try to unpack it

What is a rebel? A man who says no, but whose refusal does not imply a renunciation. He is also a man who says yes, from the moment he makes his first gesture of rebellion. A slave who has taken orders all his life suddenly decides that he cannot obey some new command. What does he mean by saying "no"?

He means, for example, that "this has been going on too long," [perhaps that was what we were seeing outside, but we will come back to that later] "up to this point yes, beyond it no," "you are going too far," or, again, "there is a limit beyond which you shall not go." In other words, his no affirms the existence of a borderline.

Camus goes on to say:

Thus the movement of rebellion is founded simultaneously on the categorical rejection of an intrusion that is considered intolerable and on the confused conviction of an absolute right which, in the rebel's mind, is more precisely the impression that he "has the right to..." He demonstrates, with obstinacy, that there is something in him which "is worth while..."

We have heard this outside, but we will get back to it. Camus says this about someone who uses that positive power on himself and the society that revolts him.

I wonder if the protesters are rebelling in the sense understood by Camus.

I will come back to another concept we have not yet discussed, the concept of "freedumb"; the "freedumb" the protesters were demanding. That reminds me of the platonic concept of double ignorance, that is to say, a person who does not realize that he does not know things.

That goes hand in hand with the rise in far-right populist politics. In recent weeks, we heard of an American elected official who did

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not know the difference between the Gestapo and gazpacho. That is a good start. I hope that never happens here.

We heard people talking about alternative facts. Supposedly they exist. We heard talk of 5G, a chip being injected in people. I will not get into the issue of vaccination again, but I have even heard some questionable ideas from some members.

The most recent thing is the protester who was yelling "It's very not false". According to him, the woman who was knocked down by a horse died, but the media was not telling people. When he was told that that had been proven to be false, he yelled, "It's very not false". That is a new expression.

What really bothers me is that invoking a law like the one the government is proposing to use means that perhaps, one day, the government that is in power will use the somewhat controversial principles of the growing populist far right. Right now, this government could decide to do what the NDP does not want it to, namely, put a stop to the legitimate pursuit of freedom by certain movements.

Like my NDP colleagues, I see myself as a progressive. A progressive is someone who works tirelessly in an effort to support people who are seeking to free themselves from a situation they are trapped in.

In 10 or 20 years, when indigenous, environmental or anti-globalist movements try to protest to get out of a situation that seems unfair to them, perhaps someone on the other side will invoke the Emergencies Act, because once we use it the first time, it sets a precedent.

Unlike what happened 50 years ago, when the NDP leader at the time said no to the War Measures Act, my NDP colleagues will have to live with what happens in this moment in history.

● (1545)

Hon. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was very interested in my hon. colleague's comments. I found that his speech was supported by several arguments.

That said, I have a question for him about what he said at the end of his presentation.

Is that a good enough excuse to do nothing about what he too described as the far right that exists here, that has the money and the tools to do damage? In 50 years' time, we may regret it if we decided to do nothing today.

● (1550)

Mr. Mario Simard: Mr. Speaker, the best tool we have against populism is education. It is not about trying to shut these people up; it is about giving them relevant and accurate information. I respectfully submit that an additional tool we could have had was the following. If our health care system was not in such bad shape, the lockdowns might have been shorter. The federal government had a role to play in this. If it had paid its fair share of funding for the health care system, perhaps the pandemic would not have stirred up this grumbling and this passion motivated by rancour in some individuals. My colleagues have a responsibility in that regard.

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[English]

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has called Canadians names. He has called them misogynists and racists, and asked if we are actually going to tolerate these people. I am just wondering what the member's comments would be around the Prime Minister's actions in this. We saw, with the rail blockades in 2020, half of cabinet running around the country talking to everybody to try to resolve the situation when Quebec was running out of propane.

Could there not have been something similar, instead of calling Canadians names?

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard: Mr. Speaker, in his speech earlier this week, my colleague illustrated exactly what I am criticizing. He drew a parallel with one of his friends, who was supposedly unvaccinated and could not go to restaurants. That is crass populism that must be condemned. A pandemic is a complicated situation that will not be resolved by reopening restaurants. Now, for a public policy-maker to make a speech that allows him to side with people who express their anger and hatred in an unacceptable way is something I would never go along with.

The position of the Liberal Party, which is trying to limit individual freedoms, and the position of certain members of the Conservative Party, who are trying to rally useful idiots to their cause, are both unacceptable to me.

[English]

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened attentively to many of the points the member laid out. I find that we actually agree on many of these points, but one point I would like the member to elaborate more on is the connection between populism and extremism. It is true that there is an element of both of these things within this movement? We have seen it from folks such as Pat King and organizers at Canada Unity.

Would the member please elaborate on the dangers of populism and extremism?

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard: Mr. Speaker, all rebellious movements that are driven by anger and resentment are dangerous. The populism that we are seeing today is very clear for the left. It is easy to identify. We hear a lot about it, especially south of the border. I am especially worried about my colleagues in the west. Perhaps it affects us less in Quebec, but there is also left-wing populism on identity issues, where people are ready to label anyone who tries to give weight to their collective identity and who presents themselves as a Quebecker. There are now attempts to present that as spontaneously racist. That is also a type of populism that must be condemned.

[English]

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has proclaimed a public order emergency under the Emergencies Act. The question before us today in this House is whether the proclamation is consistent with the law.

For a public order emergency to be proclaimed to deal with the blockades here in Ottawa and across the country, three criteria must be satisfied.

First, there must be an urgent, critical and temporary situation where there is serious violence or the threat of serious violence against people or property for the purpose of achieving an ideological, religious or political objective.

Arguably, the government has met this first criterion. The RCMP raid in Coutts, Alberta, resulted in the seizure of high-powered guns with scopes, handguns, ammunition, high-capacity magazines and body armour decorated with patches associated with white supremacist and other extremist groups. Thirteen people have been charged in connection with the seizure, including four with plotting to murder police officers. The RCMP says that these individuals were organized, highly armed and dangerous. In addition, some of the organizers of the blockade here in Ottawa used language that suggested they were ideologically motivated and willing to use force to achieve their ends.

The second criterion that must be met is that either the situation endangers the lives, health and safety of Canadians, and is of such proportion or nature as to exceed the capacity or authority of a province to deal with it, or the situation seriously threatens the ability of the Government of Canada to preserve the sovereignty, security and territorial integrity of Canada.

The government can make the case that either or both of these elements have been satisfied. It is clear the blockades endangered the lives, health and safety of Canadians in downtown Ottawa. The diesel fumes, the constant and ear-shattering noise, the fireworks and so many other things hurt the 12,000 Canadians living around the Ottawa blockade. The Province of Ontario supported the invocation of the Emergencies Act, implying that the blockade exceeded the province's capacity to deal with the situation.

The government can also argue that the situation seriously threatened its ability to preserve the sovereignty, security and territorial integrity of Canada. The control of an international border is the hallmark of a sovereign state. At one point, four Canadian border crossings were blockaded: Windsor, Emerson, Coutts and Surrey. The blockade in downtown Ottawa, the seat of our government and our national legislature, was also arguably a threat to the sovereignty and security of Canada, as was the call by some convoy organizers for the overthrow of government.

The third criterion that must be satisfied is that the situation "cannot be effectively dealt with under any other law of Canada". It is important to note that the act uses the word "effectively" rather than "ideally".

The government made an announcement about the public order emergency on the afternoon of February 14, but the promulgation of the three orders in council effecting the powers took several days. The blockades ended in Windsor on February 13, in Surrey on February 14, in Coutts on February 15 and in Emerson on February 16. It is clear that the border blockades were effectively dealt with under the existing laws of Canada and not under Emergencies Act powers.

Here in Ottawa, while Emergencies Act powers were used, they were not needed. Chris Lewis said exactly that yesterday. He said that there was a lack of law enforcement and a lack of police officers, but not a lack of laws to enforce. He said that making arrests, seizing trucks, towing, cordoning off the city, putting up checkpoints and getting thousands of additional officers to assist the Ottawa police could all have been done under the existing laws of Canada. He is a former commissioner of the Ontario Provincial Police: the largest police force in the province of Ontario.

● (1555)

Furthermore, it is clear the Emergencies Act powers allowing the government to seize financial accounts could have been done under existing law. Ontario Attorney General Doug Downey did exactly that on February 10, when he obtained an order under section 490.8 of the Criminal Code to freeze access to millions of dollars donated through the platform GiveSendGo.

Lawyer Paul Champ also did exactly that on February 17, when he obtained a Mareva injunction under existing common law that froze millions of dollars, including cryptocurrency, raised for the convoy protests.

These actions by the Ontario Attorney General and Paul Champ were done under existing laws, and were also done with court approval, unlike the Emergencies Act powers to freeze accounts without court approval that the government has now claimed for itself. These emergency powers may not pass the Oakes test with respect to proportionality or the requirement to minimally impair rights and freedoms.

The government has not met the requirement of the act that the situation cannot be effectively dealt with under any other law of Canada. Therefore, I cannot support the motion. I would add that if the House supports the motion, it would be giving the government powers it likely does not lawfully have under the act.

While I cannot support the motion, it is clear that the blockades in Ottawa and at the border were unlawful, illegal and, in many aspects, criminal. It is also clear that the existing laws of Canada did deal, and could have effectively dealt, with the situation. A lack of timeliness in law enforcement, and a lack of federal-provincial co-operation and other operational deficiencies, cannot be dealt with under the Emergencies Act, nor under the emergency doctrine of peace, order and good government.

The failure to uphold the rule of law is the issue here, not a lack of law to effectively deal with the situation. In a free and democratic society, the rule of law is essential. Without the rule of law there can be no freedom, because liberty without lawful limits, taken to its logical conclusion, is anarchy. Without the rule of law, there can be no democracy, because democracy without our most basic law, our Constitution, is nothing less than majoritarian mob rule.

It is clear we, as a country, have not been serious about the rule of law, and because we have not been serious about the rule of law, thousands of Canadians thought it appropriate to unlawfully and illegally blockade four international border crossings and our national capital for more than three weeks.

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We have not been serious about the rule of law when a person's race, religion or creed determines whether or how the law is enforced, such as when the CN mainline in Ontario and pipelines in Western Canada were blockaded for weeks on end two years ago, and when the lawlessness continued last week. We see this when a mob violently tears down statues in the public square with no consequence, when dozens of Canadian churches were vandalized or torched in the past year, and when, in this place, the Prime Minister violated the Shawcross doctrine of the Constitution by pressuring the Attorney General to drop the criminal prosecution of SNC-Lavalin, something for which he was never censured or held in contempt. We saw this last year when the government defied four orders of the House and its committee for the production of the Winnipeg lab documents.

If flagrant disregard for the rule of law is tolerated, things will fall apart. The centre cannot hold and anarchy is loosed. What is needed now is not the use of the Emergencies Act, but rather ensuring that the rule of law in this country is upheld.

● (1600)

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to ask my learned friend a very specific question with respect to the safeguards that exist within the Emergencies Act. I know it was invoked on February 14. We are debating it today. The order was presented two days after the invocation. There are other measures that are forthcoming.

Can the member speak to the safeguards that are in place to ensure that we protect the rights of all Canadians? These emergency measures are temporary, measured, and they ensure that they are in compliance with the charter.

Hon. Michael Chong: Madam Speaker, three of the safeguards that have been put into the act are the three criteria that the government must meet in order to trigger a public order emergency.

The first is a threat or the actual use of violence to achieve a political, religious or ideological objective. The second is a threat to the health, safety and lives of Canadians that is beyond the capacity of a province to deal with, or alternatively that there is a threat to the sovereignty, territorial integrity or security of this country. The last is that there is no other law in Canada, federal or provincial, that could effectively deal with the situation.

Those three criteria are safeguards in preventing intrusions into civil liberties.

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• (1605)

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his speech. I often enjoy listening to his speeches in the House and I respect that he presents a calm and often rational approach.

My question is simply this. When we see this discombobulation of democracy, when we hear the chief of police in Ottawa—the interim one, granted—say very clearly that they would not have been able to take action in the way they did here unless they had these resources, when we hear from the organizers their plans to continue these things—they are retreating right now, but talking about moving forward later on—and when we see this increased instability across the country, how does the member reconcile that position with what we are all seeing and experiencing across Canada?

Hon. Michael Chong: Madam Speaker, the issue here is not a lack of laws to effectively deal with the situation either here in Ottawa or previously at the four border crossings; it is a lack of law enforcement.

As the former commissioner of the Ontario Provincial Police said yesterday, the power to make arrests, seize and tow vehicles, cordon off the city, put up checkpoints and get thousands of additional officers in to assist the Ottawa police already exists in the existing laws of Canada. In fact, he said that it is used practically every Canada Day in this city. It is used practically every Remembrance Day. Clearly the emergency powers were not required for the clearing of the blockades at the four border crossings, because in some cases they were cleared prior to the invocation of the public order emergency and in some cases before the orders had really taken effect.

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): Madam Speaker, if I were a senior member of the NDP, such as the MP for Windsor West, I would be ashamed that my leader threw the local police under the bus, as he did in the House last Thursday. I would be doubly ashamed if my leader whipped my vote on the Emergencies Act.

Once again, the NDP are poised to prop up the Prime Minister so as to not hold the Prime Minister to account. The very fact that the standoffs at the Windsor-Detroit and Coutts borders were ended peacefully, clearly demonstrates that the Emergency Act was, quite frankly, unnecessary.

I am wondering if the member would agree that the greatest emergency in Canada today is that the NDP continues to prop up this power-hungry Liberal government and today will vote with the Liberals to allow—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have to allow five to 10 seconds to the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills to answer.

Hon. Michael Chong: Madam Speaker, the issue here is a failure to uphold the rule of law that has been years in the making.

Two years ago the blockades on the CN main line and in western Canada at the pipeline were allowed to continue for weeks. People who tear down statues in front of provincial Legislatures and in other public squares in this country suffer no consequences. I think we have a failure here to uphold the rule of law, and that is what is needed, rather than the invocation of the Emergencies Act.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Madam Speaker, today marks one week since the Prime Minister invoked the Emergencies Act. This has been a long, emotional and distressing week for all Canadians, no matter one's political stripe, and it is not difficult to understand why.

The Emergencies Act has never been used in Canada. It is meant to be a measure of last resort, something to sombrely consider only if all other attempts at resolution have been exhausted and only when there are no alternatives remaining. It requires the government to legally justify why it is necessary. Unfortunately, the government has failed to give the critical justification needed for this unprecedented decision.

The onus is on the government to justify every single line of the regulations it is invoking under the Emergencies Act. The Liberals need to convince Parliament why these measures are needed, rather than the opposition to explain why they are not. The onus is on the government to specifically outline how the existing laws of our provinces and nation could not deal with the protest and the onus is on the government to lay out all its evidence on how the existing Criminal Code and intelligence gathering have failed and why it needs these sweeping new powers. The onus is on the government, and Canadians are left wanting.

The Canadian Constitution Foundation said, “The high threshold for declaring a public order emergency in the Emergencies Act has not been met.”

The BC Civil Liberties Association said, “Canada has not met the legal threshold for the Act’s invocation.”

Our entire legal system is based on the notion that even in the most trying of circumstances, there is due process. To oppose the invocation of the Emergencies Act, one does not need to condone the actions of all the protesters. What we need to do is step back and review what powers we as parliamentarians are being asked to approve. In doing so, we must determine if there is legal justification. Let me remind my colleagues that political justification does not always equate to legal justification.

If we review the government's proclamation declaring a public order emergency in the Canada Gazette, we will find that almost every one of its justifications was aimed at the border closures. It is important to note that the border closures had all ended, as my colleague just said, by the time the Prime Minister spoke in this House.

There is no disagreement that blocking critical infrastructure such as railways, bridges, highways and border crossings should never be allowed. In the spirit of the agreement on that point, I hope there will be unanimous support from all parties for eternity.

The question we must ask ourselves is this: What made the government determine these specific blockades were threats to national security when previous protests were not? Was it the size and scope of their economic impact? Was there intelligence suggesting they would prolong, or were there other considerations that made these protests different from previous ones that also had shut down large parts of our economy and put communities at risk? I do not ask these questions to be rhetorical but to determine the threshold the government is using.

The government is being taken to court by constitutional and civil liberties associations for this very reason. They too are concerned about the precedent being set by invoking the Emergencies Act. They fear that sometime down the road, using the same economic or security risk justifications, some future government will do the same.

To invoke such sweeping powers, the government must be able to articulate a much stronger and definitive rationale. While this is a place normally full of platitudes, it would be wise for all of us to focus on the details of the regulations.

After careful review of the Prime Minister's speech in the House, I see that not once did he get into the details of how the specific new powers will be used, nor did he lay out any argument whatsoever on why the current laws were not sufficient. If his intent was to persuade the members of this House, he was short on details and he failed to make a convincing argument.

I have many concerns, but I first want to push back on the Prime Minister's comment that the scope of the Emergencies Act is "targeted".

● (1610)

Within the regulations, the Minister of Public Safety is given an incredible amount of latitude to designate geographic areas where the Emergencies Act will be used. In fact, the regulations give the minister absolute power to decree that the act can be used for "any other place as designated". Forgive me in advance for not being willing to support something that gives one minister such extraordinary powers.

According to the emergency preparedness minister, the government intends to continue exercising the far-reaching powers of the act for "as long as they are required". Does that mean for the totality of the full 30 days?

If we look outside this very chamber, we will find that the trucks are gone. The obvious question is this: When can everyday Canadians return to Parliament Hill? Let me be very clear. I am not talking about on the streets or sprawled out around downtown; I am talking about on the snow-covered lawn. What information or intelligence is the government using to determine this decision? This is not a rhetorical question; it is valid and must be answered. The public cannot even come to support or oppose the very matter we are debating today. While the Prime Minister has said the government is not currently infringing on the charter rights of Canadians, such as the right to peaceful assembly on the lawn of Parliament, I beg to differ.

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On the issue of the Emergencies Act prying into the personal bank accounts of people, I believe it is the most constitutionally shaky of all the government's new powers. Anyone who is downplaying the severity of the government giving financial institutions the power to freeze bank accounts has lost sight of the forest for the trees. There are reports that people who made donations before the government ever shut down the crowdfunding websites have had their bank accounts frozen. As confirmed by finance officials, the Liberal government is giving banks the absolute power to make their own decisions on whose accounts are frozen. Let me remind this House what that means: It means freezing bank accounts without a court order, without any checks and balances or any direct and immediate oversight.

I want to highlight what one law firm had to say about these regulations. Stikeman Elliott wrote:

...leaving it to financial service providers to investigate their customers or to rely on lists of names, not set out in any law, that are provided by law enforcement or other government agencies is extraordinary, particularly given the potential to be prosecuted for dealing with such persons.

I would say to my NDP colleagues that the Liberals just gave the banks the power to be both judge and jury.

Moreover, the regulations state that the banks must disclose financial information to the RCMP and CSIS if they have reason to believe an individual was involved in the protests. A "reason to believe" is a very low bar for handing over personal banking information. I fail to see how a "reason to believe" does not infringe on section 8 of the charter, which guarantees that everyone has the right to be secure against unreasonable search and seizure.

Also found within these regulations is that banks are immune from civil proceedings for compliance with this order. Regardless of ill intent or error, any individual negatively impacted has zero legal recourse.

In closing, if the government had approached this House with other options before what is in front of us today, perhaps it would have found more receptive audiences. For example, if the RCMP needed parliamentary approval to operate outside its normal jurisdiction when requested to do so by a provincial government, I see no reason why that could not be done. The Prime Minister should have accepted our leader's invitation to work with other parties to see where we could have gone from there.

I simply cannot in good conscience vote for this motion for these reasons. The powers are too sweeping, the justification is too lacking and the precedent is too dangerous. I want nothing more than for the government to show compassion and leadership for all Canadians. Moreover, I do not want to see anyone blockade or stop the movement of Canadian families or businesses as they go about their day. We must remember that we are all citizens and will remain so after this. We cannot continue to just talk past each other. Let us lower the temperature and begin the essential work of bringing Canadians back together.

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● (1615)

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the honourable member for his comments today. I have listened to some very thoughtful speeches from members of the Conservative Party during this debate. I have also listened to some that I found quite upsetting. I appreciated his comments at the end of his speech about bringing the temperature down.

One of the member's colleagues said on Twitter that passing this Emergencies Act would take this government another step towards dictatorship. I find that kind of language quite disturbing and not helpful in engaging in very civil discourse. I am wondering if the honourable member could comment on that, please.

● (1620)

Mr. Larry Maguire: Madam Speaker, as my colleague rightly said, in my closing remarks I said it is time to get together to come to a solution on this.

Are we going to leave the Emergencies Act in place for 30 days, when there are no trucks left on the streets of Ottawa? My colleagues have mentioned that in the House a number of times today. I believe there is as much peace on the streets as we have seen in over a month, and more so, and I believe there is an opportunity for us to get together.

We have to remember, as well, why this started in the first place. It was because the Prime Minister decided to take a sector that was already 80% vaccinated, and force a vaccination mandate. That was fine when COVID first broke out. When he saw omicron numbers already going down for two weeks before he made the decision to ask for double vaccination for these truckers, he did it to divide Canadians. There can be very few other reasons for it.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Emergencies Act is the ultimate action a government can take. By making this evening's vote a confidence vote, is the Prime Minister not injecting partisanship into a vote that should reflect the conscience of each member of the House?

[English]

Mr. Larry Maguire: Madam Speaker, my colleague's question is a very important one. Holding a vote as a confidence vote is a very serious matter. I have heard others in the House make comments on this during question period and in their speeches today as well.

Is the Prime Minister doing this because he wants to force the NDP to vote with him, or is he doing it to cover some of the dissension within his own caucus? I think that may be part of the reason he has decided to make this a confidence vote tonight: He is very afraid of losing it.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, we can agree, my colleague and friend and I, that all levels of government had failed here in Ottawa. The occupiers had been asked to leave. They were asked to leave by the Anishinabe and Algonquin people. The City of Ottawa and the Conservative Premier of Ontario had also tried to use their tools to move the people from Ottawa. Even a court injunction could not end this occupation.

We have heard from the former defence minister and justice minister from Stephen Harper's government, Peter MacKay; former Ottawa police chief and current Conservative senator Vernon White; and the former security adviser to Stephen Harper, that this meets the bar. They support using this act to take action right now.

What does my colleague say to his fellow Conservatives, including the Premier of Ontario, who has asked us not to abandon him and not to abandon the people of Ottawa? New Democrats will not do that. In light of all the things that were used, even a court injunction, what does the honourable member say to his former Conservative colleagues and to current Conservatives who support our moving forward with this?

Mr. Larry Maguire: Madam Speaker, there is a huge difference. I mentioned in my speech the low bar for this emergency measure being used. All other border crossing situations were already solved before the Prime Minister stood up in the House. Those border crossings, which I completely believe should never have been closed, were opened peacefully, albeit there might have been some altercations that were not above board. Those were cleared up without the Emergencies Act put in place, and before the Prime Minister stood up in the House.

The public safety minister, who wants to direct and work with the provinces, gave them no direction. He allowed the protestors to stay in Ottawa. They were actually invited to be here for three days, and—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance.

● (1625)

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am sharing my time today with my colleague from Louis-Hébert.

It is an honour to join this important debate in the House of Commons. We meet at a time heavy with history and laden in legacy. Today I wish to share with the House what the invocation of the emergency measures act is, and also what it is not. I will also provide insights into the financial measures included in the invocation.

Our government has taken the unprecedented step of invoking the Emergencies Act to restore peace and order across the country, and to hold that peace. The measures are temporary, geographically specific and proportionate. They are designed to respect people's rights, to address the crisis at hand and to comply with parliamentary oversight.

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Let me be very clear. The Emergencies Act is not a blanket suspension of civil liberties. It is not a suspension of the charter, and it does not represent our government's first action in dealing with the multiple threats to peace and security taking place across the country. We got to this point due to the actions of a small group of well-organized but not well-intentioned people who could not accept the results of the 2021 election, an election where the issue of how to continue the fight against COVID-19 was front and centre, and where each of the parties put forward their platforms and Canadians made a choice.

Since that election, we have come together in this House, in person and virtually, to debate and shape, to push and pull the policies, programs and priorities of a nation. When we are not in the chamber, we continue to hear from and engage with our constituents. Every member in this place and in the other chamber, day in and day out, receives and responds to letters, emails, tweets, messages, direct messages and more on these and other substantive issues. We engage; we listen; we respond. All of these are indicators and proof of the democratic system at work, but that system was not good enough for a tiny group of people, frustrated because they did not get their way. They planned and they plotted to tear down our institutions.

While the public face of these illegal occupations was a demand to end vaccine mandates, which are regulated by provincial and territorial governments, the core of this movement was not one of bouncy castles and Friday night street parties. Its stated goal was to overthrow a duly elected national government, to weaken our democratic institutions, to spread discord and disinformation, to foster fear and, in the worst possible scenario, to foment violence. As evidenced by the discovery of the weapons cache, subsequent arrests and charges laid against individuals at Coutts, there was apparent readiness by some in this movement to murder police officers and any Canadian who would stand in their way.

These occupations were not developed to end vaccine mandates. They were designed to be an arrow aimed at the beating heart of our democracy to appropriate our freedom and our flag while robbing fellow citizens of their ability to walk to work, to open their business, to get groceries, to drive to the pharmacy and to simply sleep in peace, quiet and security.

That arrow has missed its mark. Canadians will not be fooled or divided. We are resolute in the face of this attempt to destabilize our democracy and to cause lasting harm to our economy and to our international reputation.

The illegal blockades caused serious harm to provinces, to communities and to the country. They threatened businesses, big and small, put Canadian workers at risk and robbed our economy of billions of dollars. For example, the blockade at the Ambassador Bridge affected about \$390 million in trade each day; in Emerson, Manitoba, about \$73 million in daily trade was affected, and in my province, at Coutts, Alberta, about \$48 million a day in daily trade was affected by the blockades.

[*Translation*]

The illegal actions that have been taken have shaken international confidence in Canada as good place to invest. Canadian jobs and Canada's prosperity are at stake.

[*English*]

Protesters against vaccine mandates do not set out to make Canada poor, but people who seek to undermine our democracy do. No responsible government could, under these circumstances, let the safety of its citizens, the health of its economy or its international reputation as a reliable trading partner be harmed in such a manner and to such a degree.

Our government took action, which is how we arrived at the decision to declare this national emergency and to invoke the act. The emergency economic measures order has allowed the government to take concrete action to stop the financing of these illegal blockades. The measures have allowed the federal government to take a coordination role in what would otherwise have been beyond our normal jurisdiction. Specifically, they were aimed at crowdfunding platforms and payment service providers, as well as at Canadian financial service providers.

● (1630)

In response to a question consistently raised by the opposition over the course of this debate, I would note that crowdfunding platforms and some payment service providers are not ordinarily subject to the anti-money laundering and anti-terrorist financing laws. It therefore stands to reason that they could be used to finance unlawful activities, such as illegal blockades.

To address this, the order extended the scope of Canada's anti-money laundering and anti-terrorist financing rules to cover crowdfunding platforms and payment service providers. Specifically, the entities that are in possession of any funds associated with illegal blockades are now required to register with the Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre of Canada, FINTRAC, and to report suspicious and large-value transactions of persons involved in the blockades. This is mitigating the risk that these platforms could be used to receive funds from illicit sources or to finance illicit activities.

With respect to financial service providers, the order directs them to intervene when they suspect that an account belongs to someone participating in illegal blockades. This means that banks, insurance companies and other financial service providers must now temporarily cease providing financial services, including freezing their accounts, when they believe an account holder or client is engaged in illegal blockades. The order applies to all funds held in a deposit, chequing or saving account and to any other type of property. This also includes digital assets, such as cryptocurrencies.

Of course, these service providers are required to unfreeze accounts when the account holder stops assisting or participating in illegal blockades.

*Statutory Order**[Translation]*

With the emergency economic measures order, the government is also directing Canadian financial institutions to review their relationships with anyone involved in the illegal blockades. The order also gives federal, provincial and territorial government institutions new powers to share any relevant information with banks and other financial service providers if that information helps stop the funding of the illegal blockades and unlawful activities occurring here in Canada.

The vast majority of Canadians, those who are law-abiding and not involved in these illegal blockades, will see absolutely no difference. These measures are temporary. They will apply for 30 days and are aimed at individuals and businesses that are directly or indirectly involved in illegal activities that are hurting our economy.

[English]

The emergency measures we have declared were designed, as was the act itself, to respect the charter and to ensure the protection of charter rights. We treat the rights protected by the charter with utmost seriousness, as we do the safety and security of all Canadians.

Like so many others in this place and across the country, I am worn out from that persistent, nagging, daily battle against the relentless, heartless and invisible foe that is COVID-19. No one asked for this virus. We simply had to respond to it the best we could, together.

I was not a sitting member during the first two years of the pandemic, and I take this opportunity to salute and thank members of all parties, Greens, New Democrats, Bloc Québécois, Conservatives, Liberals and independents alike, for their heroic handling of a once-in-a-century challenge, with \$511 billion invested in the lives and livelihoods of Canadians so that we could get through the worst of the pandemic. However, while we may all be done with COVID, COVID may not yet be done with us.

As we head into a new phase of living with the virus, let us remember who we are as Canadians, what we have built here, north of the 49th parallel, who we are on the world stage, and what we can achieve when we work and pull together. There are forces at play that would love nothing more than to see us fail. We will not succumb to such elements. We will prevail. It is in our very DNA to do so. In the face of this national emergency, our government has taken specific and targeted action, and we have, by law, promptly submitted those actions to parliamentary approval, to committee oversight, and to the critical observation of the media, academics and Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

The debate will continue. Thoughtful commentators, thoughtful critics, the media and civil society will weigh in with concerns and observations. All of this is as it should be. In the final analysis, we have stood for the rule of law. We have been careful to limit the extent of these measures, and we acted in the defence of our economy with a solemn commitment to peace, order, good government and the health of our society. As we submit these actions for the democratic approval of this chamber, we know that brighter days lie ahead.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, the hon. member from across the way made mention that the protests that took place in Ottawa could be traced back to organized crime groups or terrorist-like groups, as he accused them of being. However, he did not offer any evidence for this, and the minister just a few days ago made the same types of accusations when he was doing a media press conference. The media followed up with a number of questions in that regard. When the media asked him if he could provide evidence, he was not able to. The media then asked if it seemed like more of a hunch, or whether it was substantiated. He had to admit that it really was just a hunch, something that he felt might be a tie.

I am wondering if the hon. member has evidence that he would like to present to the House of Commons that this is in fact a terrorist-like organization and a large organized crime group.

• (1635)

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Speaker, the best example we have of the core ideology at the heart of these blockades and illegal protests is the cache of weapons and body armour and the plotting discovered by RCMP agents in the province of Alberta to murder police officers and anybody who stood in their way. One simply has to go—

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: How is that related to Ottawa?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I would ask the member to allow the minister to answer, please, and not heckle.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Speaker, I did not hear an answer, so I was curious.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The minister is answering the question.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Speaker, what Canadians simply need to do is look at the social media feeds of the people behind the protests and they will understand very clearly the ideology and thinking behind these illegal blockades and protests.

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I recognize the member's intelligence and common sense. We now know that invoking the Emergencies Act, as the government is trying to do tonight, is no longer necessary, if it ever was.

Would the member not agree that it would be more appropriate to use this time to gather in a committee to determine which tools could prevent crises like the one we have experienced, instead of resorting to disproportionate measures after the fact?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his kind words and praise.

Despite the differences in our political ideologies, I think that we can both agree on the need to strengthen peace, order and safety for all Canadians and Quebecers.

The government believes it is obvious that the situation across the country remains delicate and precarious. It is not enough to simply call for peace and order; these have to be maintained. That is our objective at the moment, and we will take all this very seriously while upholding the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, we have heard a lot of division and rhetoric throughout the occupation. We heard that the Leader of the Opposition said she did not think we should be asking the protesters to go home, that we need to turn this into the Prime Minister's problem and more divisive action like that. Also, one of the top four leaders of the convoy was a former Conservative candidate. On the other side, we heard the Prime Minister's rhetoric demeaning people who do not agree with him.

Does my colleague not agree that the Prime Minister needs to acknowledge that his tone has also helped create division? He has pushed people to the margins who do not agree with him. People have suffered by doing the right thing and implementing the mandates according to health officials, which has harmed their businesses and whatever else. Every Canadian has struggled.

Does my colleague agree that for us to move forward and heal as a nation, the Prime Minister needs to step up and change the rhetoric and the tone he is using?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Speaker, my focus as Associate Minister of Finance and Minister of Tourism and a member of this government is to ensure that we have peace, security, good government and safety for Canadians from coast to coast to coast. The situation is still precarious, as the member may well have seen—

• (1640)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have to move on.

[Translation]

Resuming debate.

The hon. member for Louis-Hébert.

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Louis-Hébert, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the decision we are required to make today in this vote is without question one of the most important that a parliamentarian may be called to make. History will judge our votes and our debates in the House.

This vote is about fundamental issues in a democracy. On the one hand, it is about the duty of the government to protect our institutions and the public order, which is necessary in a free society. On the other hand, it is about the protection of citizens' civil liberties, which are just as fundamental in a free society.

First and foremost, I am not going to engage in the kind of attempts that the Bloc Québécois has made to draw tenuous connections between the Emergencies Act that we are debating today and

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its predecessor, the War Measures Act. They have very little in common in terms of checks and balances or accountability, or even protections guaranteed by the charter.

I will also not engage in the game being played by the Conservatives, who had to muster all their courage to finally ask the protesters to stop occupying Ottawa and who struggled to condemn all the misbehaviour we saw over the past few weeks in Ottawa.

I will always defend the right to peaceful protest, but one person's freedom ends where another's begins. In a democracy, people always have the right to be heard, but that right does not mean they can block critical infrastructure or negatively impact downtown Ottawa residents' quality of life for weeks. Those people have nothing whatsoever to do with the protesters' demands.

Anyone who knows me will not be surprised to learn that, 10 years ago, I was a part of the student strike. I wore a red square and marched for more than my fair share, as the saying went. However, I never supported the actions of those who blockaded the Port of Montreal or Jacques Cartier Bridge at rush hour. I never felt that was the best way to make our voices heard, and rather than raise public awareness of our cause, it inevitably turned many people against our movement and our ideas. The same happened with the convoy.

To those who may be tempted by illegal means, I say resist. Take the high road, because in a democracy, we value the noble path of non-violence and the ballot box.

Protesting in front of Parliament, in front of provincial legislatures and in front of my office, and organizing peaceful marches are all perfectly fine. However, an occupation that lasts for weeks and blockades that last for days are not fine. They caused serious problems that municipal and provincial governments could not or would not address. Their failures and their inaction emboldened others to set up blockades elsewhere in Canada, including in Emerson, Coutts and Windsor.

That is the problem that the federal government wanted to address by invoking the Emergencies Act. Let me be clear. I agree with the government's objective. However, I have serious questions about the means chosen. The Emergencies Act is undoubtedly the most draconian weapon in the government's legislative arsenal and, in this case, it confers enormous powers on the state, including the power to freeze bank accounts without due process. To invoke this legislation, a very high threshold must be met, and this threshold was deliberately set high.

According to section 16 of the act, a "public order emergency means an emergency that arises from threats to the security of Canada and that is so serious as to be a national emergency".

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A threat to the security of Canada is itself defined in section 2 of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act. There are four possibilities: espionage, foreign influence, activities relating to terrorism, and violent insurrection against the government. The threshold is extremely high, which is by design, given the powers this act confers.

The government based its decision on the third possibility, terrorism, which is defined in the act as follows: “activities within or relating to Canada directed toward or in support of the threat or use of acts of serious violence against persons or property for the purpose of achieving a political, religious or ideological objective within Canada or a foreign state”.

I think it is clear that the second aspect, the political objective, is not a factor here, but for the first one, the threat of serious violence must constitute a national crisis. That part of it is anything but clear to me. For the current crisis to qualify under that criterion, the government is forced to consider economic disruption or, at this point, the threat of economic disruption, as a threat of serious violence against persons or property, as set out in the act.

Along with many eminent lawyers and various experts, such as Professor Leah West and even the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, I believe that is a false equivalence. It is a slippery slope that dilutes the strict criteria under the Emergencies Act.

During the rail blockades put in place in early 2020 to support the demands of the the Wet'suwet'en, I never thought it would be appropriate to invoke the Emergencies Act. It is precisely because, even if there were some major economic disruptions, the line was never crossed, there was never any violence or threat of serious violence against property or persons. I look at the present situation in the same way.

• (1645)

I am aware that I do not have all the information that cabinet has. As a parliamentarian, I must make decisions based on the information that is provided to us.

Based on what is available to me, I cannot help but echo the comments of my colleague from Beaches—East York, that contorting the application of the law in order to defend the law is not a very comfortable position to be in.

Beyond the concerns I just raised about the threshold for invoking the Emergencies Act, I also have questions about the fact that we are being asked this evening not to retroactively confirm the use of the act, but instead to extend its application. I wonder if it is still necessary in the circumstances, considering the occupation of Ottawa is over, the police have finally and rather easily done their job, and there are no more blockades at the border.

The measures taken under the Emergencies Act may have been useful to law enforcement, or even effective, but that does not mean they are necessary or proportionate, nor that they still are as we speak. Personally, I am not convinced.

In closing, I want to make some observations in response to what I have heard during the debate in the House over the past few days. In our debates and reflections, I think we need to avoid letting our dislike of an issue affect our ability to analyze it in a neutral and

rational way, because governments change and do not always have the same views on different issues. Take, for example, environmental or indigenous issues, or even the student issues we hold dear. In the current context and for the reasons mentioned, the use of the Emergencies Act creates a serious precedent.

I also think that we must avoid ascribing too much value to opinion polls when we are debating the use of a law like this one. Public opinion is not one of the criteria set by the legislator. If I had to choose, I would far rather do the right thing than follow the trend.

In the future, I also think we will have to modernize the act to ensure that it can be used more adequately to respond to situations like the one we are facing.

To conclude, members should not interpret my comments as a repudiation of this government. I believe that in the absence of municipal and provincial leadership, the government took the steps it believed to be appropriate to address this crisis, and it did so in good faith. I agree with the government's objective of restoring order, though I disagree with its methods.

As for my vote, since 2015, the Liberal Party has had a moral contract whereby members must vote with the government on confidence votes, electoral commitments, and issues affecting Canadians' fundamental rights protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Under this contract, all other votes are free votes. I made this commitment as a member of the Liberal Party. If this evening's vote were not a confidence vote, I would vote against it. However, at the very least, as we prepare to vote, I would like to have a clear and unequivocal indication as to whether this is truly a confidence vote.

[English]

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo. The hon. member took a very analytical approach in his speech and I do appreciate all that he said.

Earlier in question period, the hon. Minister of Justice was asked about releasing any legal opinions in his capacity as Minister of Justice and Attorney General that were provided to him as minister as to the legality of imposing the act, what is the legal opinion and has the threshold been met.

The Minister of Justice and Attorney General did not provide anything in that respect. If the threshold has been met, what would the government be afraid of in releasing a legal opinion that supports its cause?

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Madam Speaker, the member touched on a lot of aspects in his question. To me, based on my analysis as a lawyer, when I look at section 16 and what is defined in the CSIS Act as a threat to the security of Canada, I do not think the threshold has been met.

However, I understand different lawyers and different legal experts can have different legal opinions. I also understand I am not privy to all the information that cabinet has. In such circumstances, there is usually always a great deal of deference given to the executive. However, based on the information I have and based on my reading of the law, I do not think the threshold was met.

• (1650)

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will start by commending my colleague for his political courage.

The member started his speech by talking about our individual responsibilities as legislators in this evening's vote. By making this a confidence vote, the Prime Minister is doing two things. First, he is preventing members of his own caucus, like the member himself, from voting according to their conscience. Second, he is preventing the NDP from voting according to its conscience without triggering another useless election.

I heard my colleague correctly. I respect his position, but I would like to know whether, despite their moral contract to vote the same way on emergency and special measures, the Liberals will make an exception for my colleague.

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Madam Speaker, I, too, have a moral contract and that is with my constituents. They know what party I belong to, and it has always been clear that I would support the government in confidence votes.

I am simply asking for a clear and unequivocal answer as to whether this evening's vote is a confidence vote or not.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague from Louis-Hébert raised some very relevant points.

He touched on the issue of freezing the bank accounts of individuals or businesses involved in the organization of these illegal occupations, who often have ties to the far right. Does he not find that cutting off the funding of all those who want to destabilize our democratic institutions is an extremely effective measure?

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Madam Speaker, that is a very relevant question. The member for Rosemont has known me long enough to know that I do not have any sympathy for far-right groups. We saw how some of these groups latched onto this movement.

I think we need to ask ourselves how we can monitor the foreign funding of certain causes in Canada.

However, a value that is dear to me as a lawyer involved in the defence of civil rights is the existence of legal proceedings when the state uses such coercive power.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague. I am very impressed by his courage.

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I think we now have a real emergency situation. I believe that the threats to Canada's security are real, consistent with the definition of threats to the security of Canada found in the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act. Unfortunately, that definition has not been included in the Emergencies Act, although it does refer to that other act.

That is why foreign-influenced activities threaten Canada. Activities that are not foreign-influenced are hidden. Does my colleague think that foreign activities pose a threat to our democracy?

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to see the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands again.

I do not believe that that aspect meets any of the four possibilities in the definition of security threat in the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act, for the simple reason that foreign interference would require a state actor. That does not appear to be the case at the moment.

In that respect, all Canadians who donate to organizations like Human Rights Watch or Amnesty International for advocacy in other countries could find themselves—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order.

The hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George.

[English]

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, we are at a historic moment in our nation's history. The sun will come up tomorrow, and the eyes of our nation, indeed of the world, will be looking at how we comport ourselves over the next couple of hours and how that vote goes at eight o'clock tonight.

If I am being completely truthful with those who are in the House, the last two years of my political life have been among the hardest in my career, and I think I speak for all members and colleagues in the House. Our nation has struggled with what is real and what is false, with being open and being closed.

We have become a nation divided. We have families that are divided. We have lost friends. We have lost family members. We have communities that are divided, torn apart in the wake of a disease that has separated us emotionally and physically from the ones that we love.

I have probably written this speech about 12 times. I have said it over in my head probably a dozen more times. I have ripped it up every time. In truth, I do not know what I am going to say as we move forward.

I struggle with how to describe what it has been like to be a leader in our community throughout these two years. I know my colleagues in the House, and those that are watching from home, have experienced the very same issues I am speaking of.

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I have listened to heartbreaking stories from people I have known for years. I have listened to heartbreaking stories from people I have just met, both vaccinated and unvaccinated, some for mandates and some for no mandates. I have been inundated with calls and requests for help. People on both sides of the issue have come forward to give me their opinions, people who have lost their jobs or who have lost their businesses, and people who simply want things to go back the way they were. I have listened to people who have lost loved ones.

COVID has not only managed to overwhelm our health care system, it has overwhelmed our souls. People were not meant to live in isolation. We are not designed to be without human contact. The devastation of this disease goes well beyond ICUs and long-term care. The mental health aspects cannot be overstated.

We are a nation divided and we are a nation that is struggling. We are a nation on the brink, because we are not made to deal with this isolation, and because of a failure of leadership.

Two weeks ago, I received an urgent call from one of my local leaders. He is a good friend. He has been a sounding board, and he has never been afraid to tell me the truth, to give me that kick in the butt. He was almost in tears as he told me about the threats of harm. He described to me the feelings he had when he learned about his grandchildren having to hide beneath their desks because there had been an active shooter in his community. His voice shook as he told me he feared for his life. He feared for his life.

He fears for his life because of the divisions of this country. He said I needed to do something for him. He needed me to talk to my colleagues on all sides of the House. He needed me to turn down the rhetoric.

We need to stop and listen. Last week, as I walked to and from my office here on the Hill, I stopped to talk, and I stopped to listen. I listened to a young man from Langley who had stayed in his vehicle in -30°C weather just for the chance to be heard. I listened to a grandmother whose son had committed suicide in December because of the overwhelming aspects of this pandemic. I listened to a trucker whose daughter also took her life last year because of the mental health challenges brought on by this pandemic.

• (1655)

The toll of this disease will not be measured in weeks or years. The toll will be measured in lives lost. It will not be just lives lost from those who suffered from COVID, but lives lost from those who lived with the mental health issues this disease created, the mental health issues governments have perpetuated with lockdowns and school closures. There is an increase in domestic abuse and drug dependencies. The measure of deaths by COVID will far surpass the numbers we see on website updates. They do not even come close to the truth. The fact of the matter is, we will not know the extent of the devastation this disease has had on us for years to come.

The people I stopped to talk to were not racists. They were not extremists. They were not here for an insurrection. As a matter of fact, I struggle with something. If this had been a real threat, I have to trust that our security and our intelligence would have shut this place down long before the trucks arrived on Wellington Street.

They were not Canadians hell-bent on usurping power or trying to overthrow our government. They simply came to Ottawa because they wanted to be heard.

They came with stories of tragedy. They came with stories of heartbreak. They came because they wanted a voice. They came because they wanted to be heard. There are 338 members of Parliament in this House, and we have all been elected to carry the voices of the electors, of Canadians, to this place. Our job is to listen. Our job is to act. Our job is to make this country a better place for everyone, not just those who we agree with, but also those who we disagree with.

When someone comes into my office at home or here in Ottawa, I do not ask which party they voted for. I do not ask if they are vaccinated, or if they are unvaccinated, because honestly, I do not care. I kind of hope that they had voted for me, but honestly, I do not care. I see them for the person they are in front of me. I listen. I show compassion. I ask how I can help.

When the trucks descended upon Ottawa the first weekend, they came because they wanted the border mandates lifted. They came because they had had enough. They came because they wanted to be heard. Instead, their voices fell upon deaf ears. What that weekend did was solidify their need to end the mandates. That weekend solidified their need to be heard.

That first weekend opened up old wounds, deep wounds that have not had a chance to heal because of the last two years. It opened up a flood gate of the pent-up emotions we have all experienced to one degree or other. We have the raw nerve of a seemingly unending pandemic and two years of mental and emotional turmoil left unchecked. They wanted their voices to be heard. Instead, they were shunned.

They were called extremists. They were labelled. The question was put to others if we should even tolerate these people. They were told their views were unacceptable. They were called misogynists. They were disavowed as people with unacceptable views, and the man who should have been listening, was not. Instead of doing his job, instead of hearing what Canadians had to say, the Prime Minister of Canada disenfranchised thousands of Canadians.

The Prime Minister motivated thousands of Canadians to come here to have their voices heard. This is arrogance and self-righteousness. It only served to inflame the situation. Leadership is about being front and centre. Leadership is about doing what is right. Leadership is about listening. Leadership is about caring, not just for those who agree with someone, but also for those who do not.

Leadership is about tolerance. It is about dialogue. A lot has been said about dialogue being needed. I have a lot of friends who are in law enforcement, and I asked them if this was needed. They said the first point of ending any conflict is dialogue and negotiation. Do we not teach our kids to use their words, to talk, listen and understand each other's sides? However, when it mattered most, the senior leader in our country chose intolerance over listening.

That is a failure of leadership when it mattered most, and we will be judged for it.

• (1700)

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank all the law enforcement officials from around the country, including the OPS, who have done such an incredible job in terms of what has ended outside of this very building.

I listened intently to the member opposite, and I think we have a very different perspective on the threat. He basically indicated that the threat of insurrection was not real. I would simply point him to the fact that we have documented evidence calling for the overthrow of the government. We have instances of weapons being found from other blockaders, including at the Alberta border, and we are investigating links between the hate group called Diagonol and what is happening here. When the arrests were actually being effected by those brave law enforcement officials whom I know this member supports, there were attempts made to dislodge their weapons. That, to me, is proof positive that this kind of legislation is required.

Would the member agree with me and with the interim chief, Steve Bell, who said that this legislation is exactly what was needed in order to effectuate the cleanup of the occupation that was occurring outside?

• (1705)

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, I can only speak to the thousands of other protests that we have seen on the Hill over the time I have been a member of Parliament. I can only speak to the people I have spoken to, the law enforcement professionals, the experts who were there, as I am not expert in this, who said this was a ham-fisted overreach in power. This could have been accomplished with the very same laws that we have.

Invoking the Emergencies Act is a very serious step, and one that should be the last measure. What was the first, second, third or fourth measure? We did not see that.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, there is a serious problem here.

All day, it has been said that it would be preferable if members voted their conscience.

The member for Louis-Hébert just told us the orders do not respect the invocation criteria for the act. That is what he just told us. If it were not a confidence motion, he would vote against it, but he does not know whether it is a confidence vote or not.

What does the member think of this situation where the Prime Minister has not even been clear with his members and does not have the courage to tell them whether, yes or no, this is a confidence vote?

[English]

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, my colleague has a very good question.

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That speaks loudly to me and says that the Prime Minister continues to be afraid that his leadership is threatened. He knows he overstepped his boundaries and his grounds, and he knows his leadership is fragile, so much so that he has to put that veiled threat out there so that his colleagues and his MPs, whether here or in his coalition with the NDP, know that if this vote fails, it could mean another unnecessary election.

It is just shameful that the Prime Minister would actually take that step. Let us not make any bones about it. He knows exactly what he is doing when he puts that out in a press conference. It is a threat, a shot that he is sending across the bow at any MP who is considering voting against him.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

We all understand that after two years, people are fed up, tired and frustrated. I also understand the right to be heard. I have attended enough protests to be heard a few times.

However, the right to be heard is not the right to honk horns day and night for 10 days in downtown Ottawa; it is not the right to harass and terrorize the public.

I do not agree with the member when he says that there was no intention to overthrow the government. That was written on their Facebook page. Far right organizers said they were prepared to work with the Senate and the Governor General to take the place of a democratically elected government.

Members of the Conservative Party, the party of law and order, support this movement and will bring coffee and pizza to these people and get their pictures taken with them. What is happening in that party?

[English]

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, it will be no surprise that I disagree with the member 100%.

Where I will agree is that we have had thousands of protests here in our nation's capital since I was elected. I get that the 10 days of honking and all manner of noise were not appropriate, but all Canadians wanted was to be heard—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the passionate speech of the member for Cariboo—Prince George. It is always hard to follow him in this House.

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First, I want to thank my constituents. I can honestly say, for all MPs in the House, that in the last two weeks we have likely received more correspondence than in any other two-week period in the last number of years on a number of these issues, and it has been a trying two years. I want to thank my constituents because they have made it crystal clear that they do not support the invocation and the continued use of the Emergencies Act. There has been a balanced feedback on this one, but the majority have clearly indicated in my riding that they do not support the Liberal government's decision.

I want to make it crystal clear that I will always support the democratic right of Canadians to protest. I am on the record, before this convoy ever arrived here in Ottawa, saying that I will always support, no matter what the issue is on the political spectrum, the right of Canadians to democratically protest. However, I am on the record saying that I will never support people breaking the law. I do belong to the party of law and order, and I am on the record stating that I will never support anyone breaking the law. That includes blockades and anything else.

I am going to focus on my Liberal colleagues and the NDP for my speech, because I think I know how the majority of the Conservative and Bloc members are going to vote, based on the indication now that this is possibly a confidence vote. Maybe my words will be for naught, but I want to get into the crux of the issue that I think we are really voting on tonight, and that is the continuation of the invocation of the Emergencies Act: not the history or why the government did it, but why we still need it going forward.

There have been some great speeches in the House already that clearly outline why people on both sides think that the government was justified or not justified in bringing it forward, but I want to focus on the question of why we need it going forward and, lacking that, the question of trust.

I will just cover the justification briefly. I have read all the tabled documents that were provided to us as members of Parliament and the stuff that has been put out in the public sphere to read. I have tried to either read or listen to every speech given by a Liberal member, but specifically the Liberal cabinet, the members of the Liberal government, because they are the ones who should be speaking more than the rest of us in the House during this debate, trying to convince us why they are implementing arguably the most draconian, powerful piece of legislation that exists in our federal laws. I do not think there is anything more powerful than the Emergencies Act when it comes to putting it into place and actually curtailing some of the freedoms that exist in this great country.

What are the justifications that have been tabled so far? If members read through the proclamation, they will see that it really hits two key points: It talks about the freezing of financial assets, and it talks about tow trucks. I have been involved in dealing with national crises, not necessarily here in Canada but around the world. I understand, maybe more than most, what serious national security threats are, and I have never felt personally that anything that has occurred across Canada over the last three weeks, dealing with the blockades or the convoy here in Ottawa, has met that threshold. Members should not take my word for it. There have been experts out there. The member for Wellington—Halton Hills laid out in his speech, a few hours earlier, clear logic that the government has

failed to meet the legal requirements to invoke the act, but it chose to do it anyway.

Let us make the assumption that the justification was valid for bringing in the invocation, that it did somehow meet the national emergency threshold. Was this because the cabinet, as has been hinted at, had access to additional intelligence or information that warranted this? How did the government communicate that to Canadians, but also to the rest of us here in the House of Commons, with this important vote coming? Did the government reach out and ask to share that information?

• (1710)

There are many of us in this House who have the appropriate security clearance, top secret security clearance, who are former members of the Privy Council. All that aside, we could quickly and quite easily read a number of members from all parties in the House into the necessary security classification and provide that intelligence or information, because lacking that, the Prime Minister is really just asking us to trust him. I will get back to the question of trust in a couple of minutes.

As the Liberal member for Beaches—East York laid out in his speech just a couple of hours ago, and as I have already hinted at, the vote tonight is really about why the Emergencies Act and all these restrictive measures are still required. I feel personally that a responsible government, even one that felt it was justified in using this very powerful piece of legislation, would have revoked these measures as soon as all the illegal blockades disappeared. Why has the Liberal government not done this?

I listened yesterday as the Minister of Emergency Preparedness was asked a direct question on national media as to why the Emergencies Act is still needed going forward when everything has been resolved. His response was that there is still work to be done. I stepped out of the chamber this morning to listen to the Prime Minister in his press conference. It was the first question he was asked, and then he was asked again by a reporter to give one specific example. His answer was about tow trucks.

We are in a national emergency because somehow we need tow trucks to move I do not know what. I have been driving in and out every day over the last two weeks here to Parliament. There were lots of vehicles illegally blockading the roads that needed to be towed out, and they are all gone. I had no issues coming in to Parliament Hill this morning.

What disturbed me and disappointed me as well during that press conference was that the Prime Minister was asked a couple of other very easy questions, such as what lessons he learned from the last few weeks, and his response was that the country is angry. I do not know if that is learning much of anything. He was asked if he has any regrets. A sign of a good leader is recognizing that one is not perfect. I know I have made plenty of mistakes throughout my military career, and I am sure even as a politician in the last couple of years. The key to learning from them is to actually recognize when we have made a mistake. That is when we learn the most, and we should have regrets if we did not do things to the best of our abilities.

What does it all mean going forward, when we still see the government continuing to support the emergency measures? Does this mean the Liberals just want to go after those Canadians who maybe happened to donate to their local neighbour, the truck driver, who might have even been fully vaccinated? I know I had constituents in my riding who came here for the protests fully vaccinated. One of my best friends, who I did not even realize had come, drove here with his wife and kids from British Columbia, protested completely legally and then went home. He drove all the way back. He did not blockade anything. He did not do anything. Because people made a \$20 donation, are they at risk? Is that why we still need these measures going forward? I had constituents reaching out to me this morning saying they are pulling all their money out of the bank and putting it all in their mattress or whatever, because they do not trust the government.

If these risks still exist, I do encourage the government to take the necessary steps to reach out and share those, because I think it is safe to say the Prime Minister has broken the trust. Canadians no longer trust him, so regardless of where we are on this issue, let us work together to build that trust. I am asking the Liberal government to share that information and make it available. If the Liberals really feel there is a threat out there that still needs to be addressed, they should bring it forward.

In conclusion, as lawyers and Liberal MPs from Louis-Hébert and Beaches—East York just stated in their speeches in the last few hours, the threshold has not been met. The only reason they are voting tonight in favour of this is that the Prime Minister would rather have a federal election than accept that maybe he did not make the right decision.

Tonight I will be voting to revoke the Emergencies Act.

● (1715)

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have listened intently to the member opposite, and I want to point out something we have heard repeatedly during the course of these past four days from the Conservative benches, which is that other steps were not taken prior to invoking this very significant piece of legislation. That is categorically false. A table was convened of all leadership at multiple levels. The RCMP officers were deputized. Ottawa declared a state of emergency. The Province of Ontario declared a state of emergency. Funds were targeted using conventional methods. Cryptocurrency was then being used by the illegal protesters, thus triggering the need to employ FINTRAC.

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I am going to address FINTRAC in my question to the member opposite. Thus far, according to the reading I did this morning on my way here, 206 accounts have been frozen among tens of thousands of people in two countries who have donated to these illegal blockades. Is that not, in fact, demonstrating the restraint that has been shown, in terms of the surgical targeting of those who are largely funding this with improper donations, including donations from foreign jurisdictions? Is that not exactly what we should be doing to cut off the supply chain to this illegal blockading?

● (1720)

Mr. Alex Ruff: Madam Speaker, I would correct my Liberal colleague. If he goes back and listens to my speech, I never actually made any allegations that there were no justifications or steps. There have been speeches that noted that, but it was not part of my speech.

With respect to the member's comment, if only 263 accounts have been frozen so far and he is saying that is a good sign of restraint, I would agree with him.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Liberals tell us that passing the Emergencies Act in its 1988 version is not abusive because it is guided by the consideration and review of the legislators we are.

However, by making this a vote of confidence, the Prime Minister is perverting the free and informed review that we should be conducting as legislators. Worse yet, he is hiding his real intentions from his members.

Does my colleague not find once again that the Prime Minister is demonstrating a shocking lack of leadership?

Mr. Alex Ruff: Madam Speaker, I completely agree with my colleague.

[English]

It is a lack of leadership. The whole purpose of the Emergencies Act is to address a case of last resort. We should not be utilizing it without absolute concern and restraint. We need to have the oversight. In fact, that is why we have the the Emergencies Act. It morphed and evolved from the War Measures Act because there was a recognition that we needed the democratic oversight of the House. We have all these tools in place through the parliamentary review committee, which can table and review the revocation within seven days, and we can get to the bottom of all of this. I am personally disappointed that the Prime Minister made this a confidence vote.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, first, I want to thank my colleague, on behalf of all Canadians, for his service to our country.

Statutory Order

We are supporting this measure reluctantly, and we have made that very clear. We have heard from other members of the Conservative Party: Doug Ford, himself a Conservative and the Premier of Ontario; Peter MacKay, the former defence minister and minister of justice under the Stephen Harper government; and Stephen Harper's own security adviser, Richard Fadden. They all believe that this situation meets the bar and that this is the right use of the act.

Given the scope of the act we are talking about today, does the member not believe that they are qualified experts? What does he say to those Conservatives who are calling for us to move forward with tonight's vote and to vote in favour of it?

Mr. Alex Ruff: Madam Speaker, every Canadian should have an opinion on this, and I fully respect their opinions. Maybe they are right that it was necessary. That is their opinion. However, I would push back and say that calling for the act when it was needed to get rid of the existing blockades here in Ottawa is not what we are voting on tonight. We are voting on whether it still needs to be in place, and I am not aware of a single protest or threat in this country that still requires the most restrictive, powerful legislation in this country.

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Don Valley North.

[Translation]

I rise in the House today on a matter of great importance. Every opportunity to rise in this place is sacred. It is a privilege that is not to be taken lightly, especially when we are called here to talk about a difficult period for Canada and for all those who call our country home.

That is what I am doing today, and I rise to assert my conviction that declaring a public emergency under the Emergencies Act was necessary to deal with the coordinated, multifaceted threats that presently weigh on our safety and security, our democracy and our economy.

• (1725)

[English]

My constituents, and Canadians in communities all across Canada, are by this point aware of the self-titled “freedom convoy” that descended on the city of Ottawa over three weeks ago to, in their own words, “end the COVID-19 mandates now”. As someone who openly welcomes opposing views and lively debate, and who has participated in dozens of protests and demonstrations over my lifetime, I supported their right to do so. This right is, in fact, entrenched in subsection 2(b) of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It protects the ability for citizens to voice their discontent, question authority and seek change. It is at the core of who we are as a people, and as an MP and a proud Canadian, I will always fight to defend it.

However, in our democracy, freedom of expression is not absolute. Subsection 2(b) extends toward lawful, peaceful protest. The charter does not protect illegal blockades and occupations. Far from seeing people exercising their constitutional rights to disagree vigorously with the government, we have instead seen intimidation, threats, harassment and an attack on our ability to produce and

trade goods. We have seen a coordinated effort by outside actors to attack our country's right to make its own decisions and chart its own path.

First, let me begin by addressing what has occurred here in Ottawa. The protest began over COVID-19 mandates and restrictions. Over the course of three weeks, it had morphed into an occupation of a city that almost one million Canadians call home. Streets were blocked, engines ran 24 hours a day, making the air difficult to breathe for neighbouring residents, and horns sounded at all hours of the night, with what many in Ottawa, the seniors, parents and students alike, have called a form of sleep deprivation torture. We saw frequent and unabated displays of hatred, including swastikas, Confederate flags and signs proudly stating “pure blood”, and acts of direct hatred when windows were smashed at local businesses because they posted signs on their windows that represented differing points of view. We have seen the desecration of our national monuments, including our National War Memorial, and an attempted arson, all of which was caught on video.

Prior to this weekend, efforts by the Ottawa police to maintain law and order in the nation's capital were unsuccessful, resulting in both the City of Ottawa and the Conservative Government of Ontario declaring a state of emergency. All of this is but one component of a much larger and more coordinated effort to undermine our institutions and our economy.

There has also been a coordinated effort to block our national border crossings, halt the flow of goods and people, and stop trade. Blockades have occurred in Surrey, Emerson and Coutts, Alberta. They have occurred at the Ambassador Bridge in Windsor, Ontario. These are deliberate attacks targeting critical infrastructure. As the chairperson of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, I heard witness testimony just last Thursday, February 17, that the blockades at these ports of entry have resulted in trade disruptions costing Canada \$3.9 billion, with \$400 million in daily losses at the Windsor crossing alone. With automotive parts, for example, no longer able to make their way to factories, shifts at multiple auto plants were cancelled and thousands of workers were sent home. All of this was impacting businesses, workers and the confidence in Canada as a reliable trading partner and a safe place to invest.

Adding to this, in the United States and indeed in other nations, foreign citizens and bodies with their own interests have openly supported the blockades and admitted to sending money and resources to help the blockades continue. In fact, it has now come to light that over 50% of all the donations received through the convoy's online fundraising campaign were American, with American billionaires donating upwards of \$90,000 alone. I ask anyone watching who hears this whether it is acceptable for any foreign actors or foreign citizens to contribute to efforts to undermine the democratic process of another country or, for that matter, to purposefully sabotage the economic trade routes of another country through blockades. These blockades, I repeat, cost \$3.9 billion in economic activity for Canadians.

I ask members of the House, particularly my hon. colleagues and friends from across the aisle, what their threshold is. Is this not enough? What is their threshold before they adopt the necessary measures to counter those who seek to undermine the decisions of the House and, more importantly, the will of Canadians at large?

Adding to this, just a few days ago, the Anti-Defamation League showed a result of their study of the online GiveSendGo fundraising campaign. It found that roughly 1,100 people in the United States who supported the January 6 insurrection last year that stormed the U.S. capital were donors of the blockades here in Canada.

● (1730)

[Translation]

I am asking all Canadians who are listening and I implore all members of the House to seriously think about these facts. As members of the House, we can at least all agree that these actions are unacceptable and that concerted action must be taken to address this affront to our democracy.

Furthermore, my hon. colleagues in the House and all Canadians watching should be alarmed by the 13 arrests at the Coutts border in Alberta last week. Law enforcement found a large cache of military firearms, ammunition and body armour, which led to charges of conspiracy to commit murder.

Measures had to be taken to protect our democratic institutions, our borders and our economy, to respond to the needs of the City of Ottawa and the Province of Ontario and of any other province requesting assistance as a result of coordinated blockades. For these reasons, I will be supporting the invocation of the Emergencies Act.

[English]

To address misconceptions and concerns regarding overreach, I want to reaffirm that this is not the invocation of the War Measures Act. We are not calling in the military. What we are doing is giving the RCMP the power to enforce local laws and work quickly and efficiently with local law enforcement. We are not putting the RCMP or any other police force under the direct control of the government. Policing operational decisions remain independent under this act, as they should and must in any strong democracy. This act also directs financial institutions to take action to halt the funding of the illegal blockades at our ports and border crossings and levy significant penalties.

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To address concerns relating to charter rights infringements, I want to share five key steps, checks and regulations built into the act and speak to the important role of the Attorney General of Canada. First, everything done by a government under the Emergencies Act must be done in accordance with the charter, full stop. It is entrenched in the preamble of the act. Second, all declarations are time-limited to 30 days. In fact, it may be less and I hope that it will be less. Third, the very act of declaring an emergency under the declaration must be reviewed by a committee of all members of Parliament and senators from all political parties. Fourth, the exercise of powers under the declaration must be reviewed by that committee. Finally, following the end of an emergency, a full inquiry must be held.

[Translation]

In closing, the Attorney General of Canada, a fellow Quebecker who represents the riding of LaSalle—Émard—Verdun, is a seasoned lawyer. He was vice dean of McGill University's faculty of law. This man has the respect of MPs of all political stripes, and it is his job to ensure that the rights of all Canadians under the charter are protected and that all necessary and crucial measures are taken in accordance with the law.

I have confidence in his abilities and in his character. I have confidence in the ability of all members of the House to ensure that the measures set out in this act are used in a measured fashion, and only when and where they are necessary to put an end to these attacks and blockades.

That is what my constituents in Vaudreuil—Soulanges and all Canadians expect from us, so let us work together to make it happen.

[English]

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, the borders are open. Those at Coutts, Emerson, Surrey and Windsor are open. That happened before the Emergencies Act was even invoked. In Ottawa, the trucks have been removed, the streets are clear and there is no threat of violence or disharmony. Most of the charges that have been laid involve mischief or maybe trespass, not exactly terrorism.

How does the member opposite, along with his colleagues, justify the continued use of the Emergencies Act going forward?

● (1735)

Mr. Peter Schiefke: Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague knows full well that this is not over. She knows full well that there are still attempts to ensure that blockades across the country are funded and that they do not stop. What the government needs to be doing right now is ensuring these blockades do not continue and do not reorganize to block the free flow of goods with our neighbours to the south. We must ensure that what happened here in Ottawa does not happen again.

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We will re-evaluate, as the days go by, whether or not these measures are necessary. It is in fact the job of the House to do just that, and I look forward to working with my hon. colleagues to make sure that is the case.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague from Vaudeuil—Soulanges, a member of the Liberal Party's Quebec caucus, for that mostly English speech.

We have been debating for three days, so we are familiar with each party's arguments. There is one thing we do not know. The member for Louis-Hébert said a few minutes ago that he does not know if this evening's vote will be a confidence vote. We do not know. We have not been told. As my hon. colleague and friend from Montcalm so eloquently put it, if this is a confidence vote, the outcome may not accurately reflect our beliefs.

My question is simple: Is this evening's vote a confidence vote, yes or no?

Mr. Peter Schiefke: Madam Speaker, it does not make any difference to me whether it is a confidence vote or not.

I am sure it is the best decision we can make as a government to protect Canadians and to help the City of Ottawa and the Province of Ontario, which both declared a state of emergency on their territory. It is also the best decision to ensure that our borders stay open to free trade with the United States and to keep our workers employed.

[English]

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to focus specifically on a concern of my constituents and of folks across the country. It relates to indigenous peoples' rights. I want the member to confirm, in plain, clear language, that invoking the Emergencies Act does not in any way, shape or form negate or restrict indigenous peoples' rights to access their lands and to even occupy their lands.

Mr. Peter Schiefke: Madam Speaker, I thank my honourable colleague for his staunch defence of his constituents.

I have full confidence in members of cabinet, most notably the Minister of Justice, and the actions they are going to take in the coming days and weeks. I know they will be working diligently to ensure that the charter rights of all Canadians will be protected as they carry out the necessary actions to bring back law and order to the city of Ottawa, as they ensure that everything that needs to be taken care of in Ontario is indeed taken care of, and as I stated before, as they ensure that we no longer have blockades blocking key points of entry into our country.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to ask my colleague about illegal money coming into Canada. He can tell us, as he did, that 50% of the funds come from outside Canada. As a result of the tracking already embedded in platforms we know where the money comes from, yet the law he proposes to support here has us looking into Canadians' bank accounts. I would like him to square that with me.

What does this accomplish that is not already being accomplished with our current financial mechanisms?

Mr. Peter Schiefke: Madam Speaker, I want to point out that the honourable member has been very selective in what he has mentioned. The reason we know who the donors are right now is that they were leaked. Somebody hacked the account of the GiveSend-Go platform and released that publicly. That is how we know. It adds to the urgency of our taking action to ensure that these funds from outside sources are not infringing on the decisions of this House and on the will of Canadians.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Don Valley North.

Mr. Han Dong (Don Valley North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is my honour to participate in today's debate and to share some of my thoughts with my hon. colleagues on the current situation in Ottawa.

These past weeks have been incredibly difficult for the residents of Ottawa. They have been stressful and the residents have suffered a great deal. I would like to begin by thanking the police forces from across the country who have stepped up and returned the streets of Ottawa to its residents. Officers from Quebec, Durham, Toronto, Sudbury, Calgary and Vancouver have all demonstrated incredible professionalism and coordination while working to end an illegal occupation that choked the city of Ottawa for more than three weeks.

While work has been under way around the clock beyond these walls to clear the streets full of trucks, vehicles, debris and fences, we as MPs have been in the chamber debating this motion to confirm the declaration under the Emergencies Act. It is important to point out that we are debating and voting on the use of an Emergencies Act, because I have been hearing some of my hon. colleagues across the way directly comparing the Emergencies Act to the War Measures Act. That is not a fair comparison.

One important difference between these two acts is that the War Measures Act did not require parliamentary oversight. The Emergencies Act does, in fact, require parliamentary oversight. I want to recognize the former prime minister Brian Mulroney's Conservative government and the parliamentarians of the 33rd session for their hard work and thoughtfulness, which is reflected in this piece of legislation. A lot of thought and wisdom have gone into making it effective while protecting the rights and freedoms enshrined in the charter and the Bill of Rights. Thanks to them, the Emergencies Act requires the oversight of Parliament and asks MPs to have a full-some debate and then vote.

I have heard repeatedly from my colleagues from the NDP that they will only support the government's use of the act if it is used in a responsible, proportionate and targeted way, and only if it is clearly necessary to restore the order and peace for Canadians most affected by these illegal blockades, especially those who live in Ottawa. I think that is a very reasonable approach. I think the majority of Canadians would expect this kind of thoughtful, deliberate approach from their representatives.

With that, I would like to thank my colleagues from all parties for engaging in this wholehearted, good-faith debate. Their passion and perspectives form the basis for the democratic parliamentary oversight that is required by this legislation.

I have received many questions in recent days on how this act works, what safeguards it has and why it is necessary at this time. I believe it is important for Canadians to understand what their government is doing, and what mechanisms are in place to keep our democracy healthy. Let me speak to these questions.

The Emergencies Act, which became the law in 1988, is a federal law that can be used in response to an urgent, temporary and critical emergency that seriously endangers the health and safety of Canadians and that cannot be dealt with effectively by any other federal, provincial or territorial law.

Under the Emergencies Act, police are given more tools to restore order in places where public assemblies constitute illegal and dangerous activities, such as blockades and occupations, as we have seen in Ottawa and at critical border crossings across the country. These tools include the ability to designate and secure places where blockades are to be prohibited, such as borders and other critical infrastructure. The Emergencies Act also allows the government to make sure essential services are rendered, for example, in order to tow trucks blocking roads. In addition, financial institutions will be authorized or directed to render essential services to help address the situation, including by regulating and prohibiting the use of funds to support illegal blockades.

Let me speak to the safeguards that are built into the Emergencies Act.

Before it can be invoked, all provinces and territories must be consulted, and they were.

● (1740)

Both the House of Commons and the Senate must vote on the declaration. If either chamber of Parliament does not vote in favour of the declaration, then it is immediately revoked. This is what we will be voting on tonight. A special joint committee of both the House of Commons and the Senate must be established to review the government's actions under the act on an ongoing basis.

The declaration expires within 30 days unless there is an extension, which both the House of Commons and the Senate would have to approve. After the emergency has ended, the Emergencies Act requires the government to hold an inquiry and table a report to each House of Parliament within 360 days after the expiration of the declaration of emergency.

I also want to be clear about what this act does not do. The Emergencies Act cannot be used to call in the military. It cannot be used to limit people's freedom of speech. It cannot be used to suspend fundamental rights or override the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and it does not prevent people from exercising their right to protest legally.

Recently, I had the pleasure of joining expert panellists while in discussion with the ethnic media about the use of the Emergencies Act. Despite our different political views, everyone on the panel overwhelmingly agreed that the act is justified and necessary. That

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is because the rule of law is fundamental to Canadian democracy and Canadian society. Our country was built on laws written to maintain the collective safety and prosperity of Canadians. That is why people from every corner of the globe come to Canada to build their life and family.

The proportionate, geographically targeted and time-limited measures in the Emergencies Act are necessary to protect residents, businesses and public institutions in the nation's capital and in border towns across the country.

My constituents are pleased with the work of the men and women in uniform and are happy that peace and order has been restored for the people of Ottawa after weeks of torment.

For weeks, Canadians have seen illegal blockades occupy their streets, disrupt their daily lives, harass people in their neighbourhoods, harm small businesses and threaten the ability of hard-working Canadians to put food on the table. For weeks, billions of dollars in cross-border trade has been disrupted, putting thousands of people's jobs and livelihoods on the line. For weeks, millions of dollars of foreign funding has flowed in from around the world to destabilize our democracy, while evidence of increased ideologically motivated violent extremism activity has mounted.

The Emergencies Act is necessary to keep our communities safe, to protect people's jobs and to restore confidence in our institutions. That is why I will be supporting the motion for the confirmation of the declaration this evening.

Finally, Canadians have suffered significantly over the past two years. They are frustrated. They are tired. They have carried the weight of a global pandemic on their backs for two years now. As we near the end of this terrible public health crisis, exhausted Canadians are looking for hope, hope that we must deliver as leaders of our communities and honourable members of Parliament.

I still remember in the very early days of the pandemic when we all gathered to pass emergency financial legislation, which went a long way to support Canadians who were facing some of the darkest days of their lives. I hope we can set aside our differences and try to work together like that again to ensure transparency and accountability during this emergency and, more than anything, to give hope to Canadians again and restore confidence in their public institutions

● (1745)

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member has stated his reasons for voting for this motion and I take him at his word.

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I will mention two other members of his caucus, the member for Louis-Hébert and the member for Beaches—East York. The member for Beaches—East York indicated that he will be voting for it because it has been made into a confidence motion. I believe the member for Louis-Hébert indicated that he is not sure whether it has been made into a matter of confidence, which is to say that any Liberal MP who votes against it will be expelled from caucus for voting against their caucus on this matter.

I wonder if I could get some clarification. Has the memorandum been sent out to Liberal MPs indicating that this is a confidence measure and that their careers will be over and they will be kicked out of caucus if they vote against it, yes or no?

• (1750)

Mr. Han Dong: Madam Speaker, I can only speak for myself. I said very clearly in my statement. It does not matter if it is a confidence vote or not a confidence vote. I am supporting this motion for what it is and what it does for the people of Ottawa and for the people of Canada. I think it is the right thing for the government to step in and invoke the Emergencies Act. It ensures accountability and allows us to get through this.

That is my reason for supporting it. It is not because it is a vote of confidence. To me, it would not make a difference.

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

He said, among other things, that there are safeguards built into the act, and they include consultation with the provinces. Seven out of 10 provinces said that they did not want the act to be invoked. The Quebec National Assembly unanimously adopted a motion. The Government of Quebec said that it did not want the act to be invoked. However, the motion does apply to Quebec.

I want to come back to the matter of a confidence vote. There is at least one member of the House who said that, if this is a confidence vote, then he would vote in favour of the motion, but that if it is not, then he would vote against the motion. It is very important for legislators to have a clear answer. In approximately two hours, it will be time to vote. We have had a lengthy and intense debate on this issue over the past few days.

Does my colleague agree that it is time for the Prime Minister to tell us whether this is a confidence vote? After all, we will be voting in two hours.

[English]

Mr. Han Dong: Madam Speaker, for a couple of days now in this House we have been listening to debate based on different views of this act. Today, there is something new: the confidence vote. As a member of this House, I truly believe our decision should not be based on whether it is a confidence vote or not. If someone wants to support this bill, they support this bill. If someone does not want to support this bill, they do not support this bill.

I think what is important to talk about tonight is whether someone thinks it is going to restore order and peace for Canadians and for residents of Ottawa.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's comments on this. I did listen to his speech, and the speaking notes were clearly prepared for him.

Has the member thought about the mechanics of what is happening here regarding Canadians' financial accounts? I have great experience in getting the actual crowdfunding platforms approved in Canada. Everything the government is pretending it is doing with these crowdfunding platforms is already part of our FINTRAC mechanism.

If that was the case, why would you try and disguise your intent here by pretending that does not exist already? If I prove to him that was the case, would it change his—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have a point of order.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I do not think that you are trying to disguise your intent here and the member is speaking to you in such a tone, and he probably should not do that.

In addition, it is probably not entirely appropriate for him to be suggesting that somebody else prepared someone's remarks in here, unless he knows that for a fact.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The points are noted.

The hon. member for Calgary Centre.

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, my apologies. I think the member across is exactly right.

My question stands. Will the member across answer whether he would reverse his position on this if we prove that what the government is pretending is happening here is not in fact the case?

Mr. Han Dong: Madam Speaker, I am not an expert, as my hon. colleague is, in FINTRAC and crowd-based funding. What I know is that through cryptocurrency and online platforms, there are millions of dollars from foreign destinations flowing into Canada to support illegal blockades, which is not right. We have very limited information about that. This is not good for our democracy and I am glad—

• (1755)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Kildonan—St. Paul.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today, which is a very serious, historic day in our country. We are literally making history today by debating the government's ability to invoke the Emergencies Act. It is a critical vote. Twelve people will decide history today.

As we know, the Liberals have a minority government, so they need 12 votes and only 12 votes to decide the future of this country and the precedent we may be setting today. That is when we look to the Green members and the NDP members. Their voices are more powerful and more important today than at any other time that I have been a member of Parliament. The power they wield today will determine the future of our country. It is really important for people at home to recognize that this is a pivotal moment in our country.

Earlier today I spoke in the House about how important the role of the NDP members is here. We know that in 1970, Tommy Douglas, one of the most adored and revered politicians in Canadian history, voted against the War Measures Act when Pierre Elliott Trudeau brought it in. Yet, today, we see serious indications that the NDP members will be voting with the son of Pierre Trudeau to prop up his government and support the invocation of the Emergencies Act. I urge them to reconsider. The importance of what we are doing today, the precedent we are setting, to be able to freeze bank accounts of political dissidents, cannot be understated.

We are here today to debate the Emergencies Act and whether or not we need it, but a week ago when the Liberals brought it in, they claimed that the threshold was met, that there was a national emergency that jeopardized public safety and our economy. However, since that time, all the blockades have been cleared. The Ambassador Bridge has been cleared and the blockade at Coutts, Alberta has been cleared. Those two, by the way, were cleared without the emergency powers, and the one in Emerson, Manitoba as well. Huge props to the RCMP in Manitoba, who did a phenomenal job of lowering the temperature, peacefully negotiating with protesters, and resolving the conflict without the need for emergency powers.

The Ottawa police and other police forces cleared the protest this weekend in Ottawa. The reasons they cited for—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order. If hon. members would have their conversations in the lobby, I would appreciate it. The hon. member is making a speech.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The blockades had been cleared. The Liberals did not need the emergency powers for that.

When it comes to Ottawa, the police have also cleared that out. However, we consistently hear ministers and members from the other side say that they need these emergency powers to end the unlawful blockades in Ottawa. That is what we keep hearing and yet, when we look at the RCMP list that was published on its website, which was retweeted by the Minister of Public Safety just a few days ago, with respect to the laws of the Emergencies Act that the police used, none of them were to clear the unlawful protest. It was the banking power that the RCMP claimed it needed. That is the only power the RCMP has cited.

That makes sense because we know police do not need the emergency powers to clear an unlawful protest. They do not need them to suppress a riot. They do not need them to clear a bridge or a piece of critical infrastructure. All of those powers were readily available to the RCMP and other police forces and to governments, yet they were not used. We are not sure why that is. We have yet to receive a clear answer on that. All we have heard is they needed these emergency powers, these unprecedented powers. As I said, the RCMP only quoted the financial measures.

I want to talk quite a bit about the financial measures because to me this is the most critical piece of the Emergencies Act. We are talking about providing the federal government the power to freeze people's bank accounts if the government does not agree with their political opinion. We heard that first-hand from the Minister of Justice on national television last week. He said that if someone sup-

ports a political position he does not like, they should be very concerned. He said that. People can look it up.

Is that really what we are going to do in this country? If there is a protest or some sort of demonstration that the government does not agree with, it can freeze their bank account, or, sorry, it can order the RCMP, who orders the bank who orders them. That is what the Liberals have been saying. It is not them; it is the hands-off.

We are voting on the power to freeze bank accounts of political dissidents today. This is why it is so shocking to me that the NDP, the party of protests, is looking to support the Emergencies Act today. It shocks me. In any social media feed of NDP members of Parliament, we see they have gone to countless protests, yet we see that the New Democrats are supporting the government's ability to freeze bank accounts.

I want to talk about the human impact of freezing someone's bank account. What does that really mean? It means that when they go to the grocery store to buy food, their debit card does not work. When they go to the gas station to fill up their car to get to work, their credit card does not work. When they go to an ATM to pull out some cash to take their spouse out for dinner, no money comes out. When their mortgage payment comes out, when their gas payment comes out, when their MTS bill, if they are in Manitoba, comes out, there is no money in the account. It is frozen. The government can freeze all of someone's assets. That is how significant this authority is, which may be given to the Liberal government today.

It is very unclear. I have received so many emails about this. We know this began as a peaceful protest, one of the largest, if not the largest, pan-Canadian demonstrations we have ever seen as it rolled across the country. Thousands of people turned out to show their support. Estimates say there were 15,000 people on Parliament Hill that first Saturday. Thousands of Canadian families donated small sums of money to voice their support for a political movement that was fighting for their right to bodily autonomy, to make their own medical choices and to hold a job regardless of their health choices. There were thousands of people.

When this was announced one week ago today, the finance minister explained how the government can freeze bank accounts. Do members want to know the terror and the anxiety felt by those thousands of people who participated in a lawful protest that very first day and people who gave \$50 three weeks ago to a convoy? Do members want to know what kind of terror that brings to someone?

Statutory Order

I have constituents saying they are pulling out tens of thousands of dollars from their bank accounts. I have a veteran, a very dear friend of mine, possibly the sweetest older man people will ever meet, who served our country valiantly for 28 years. Although he is very pro-vaccine, he supports the right for others to choose, so he gave the convoy \$50 two weeks ago. He cancelled his credit cards because he is so terrified the government is coming for his money. I have constituents who are hiding cash under their beds. That is how terrifying this power is.

• (1800)

The lack of clarity has been astounding. It was just today, seven days after that initial announcement by the Deputy Prime Minister about freezing bank accounts, that she finally clarified that if it was before Tuesday, February 15, there was nothing to worry about, as it was not retroactive. It was just from that Tuesday.

Why did it take her seven days to make that public declaration? What kind of sadistic pain were the Liberals looking to inflict on people who innocently supported something that they believed in and has given them more hope than anything else in the past two years? It is shameful.

What is really shocking is that there is no due process in this. There is no court order. It is only if someone has been suspected. The CBC reported that today. If someone is suspected of supporting the convoy, they can come for that person's bank account. This is unbelievable.

It is interesting, because the Liberal government is in power now, but there are going to be other parties in power. Do we really want the federal government to have the power to say, "We don't agree with your protest. You can't go buy groceries. We're going to freeze your bank account."

How many demonstrations are from environmental groups or social justice groups? Let us really think about this. Peaceful protest is one of our rights in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I stand by every peaceful protest. I stand against illegal blockades, and we have been very clear about that all along. Those have to end, but people have every right to peacefully protest, and thousands of Canadians supported this protest across the country when it was perfectly legal, lawful and peaceful.

The Liberals are asking us just to trust them. "Just trust us, there's parliamentary oversight", as if that means anything. This Parliament asked four times for those lab documents from the Winnipeg lab with all those shenanigans going on with the Chinese Communist Party. We never got them. He prorogued Parliament. He called a snap election both times to get out of scandals of his own making and he thinks that we are going to trust that parliamentary oversight is going to be enough to keep his government in check? I do not think so.

I will end with this. Our party, the Conservative Party of Canada, will be voting with the fullest power of our ability against giving this Liberal government the power to freeze political dissidents' bank accounts. Absolutely, without question, we will be voting against that. Absolutely.

• (1805)

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am really disappointed in the hon. member's comments just now, because I arranged a briefing for her Thursday night with departmental officials, including finance, the RCMP and FINTRAC. She was told quite clearly in response to her questions that these measures took effect on Tuesday of last week.

I am just wondering about her constituents reaching out to her. It was not just today that she found out when it came into effect; it was actually last Thursday night. I am just wondering why she is implying that she did not know, when in fact she was well aware of it last week.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Mr. Speaker, yes, I was briefed last week. What is interesting is that when the department officials say one thing and the Deputy Prime Minister of Canada says another, I'm not quite sure whom to believe. Were the department officials mistaken or was it the Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister of Canada who was withholding that information? I honestly was not sure. I am really glad she came out today, because I have been telling my constituents that I had been hearing that it was just from the 15th onward, yet we are also hearing across the country that other bank accounts have been frozen. We have no clarity on this.

Why were they withholding this information? Why were they not being more forthcoming? The Deputy Prime Minister has the attention of the nation any time she wants. Why did she not make this publicly clear? Is she just trying to punish Canadians? Does she enjoy traumatizing them? I do not know.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Kildonan—St. Paul, who talked about lack of clarity. That is an understatement.

With less than two hours to go until voting time, members on that side of the House are unable to tell us whether or not this is a confidence vote. One of their members, the member for Louis-Hébert, just told us he will vote differently if it is a confidence vote.

We will be casting a very important vote on a very important matter less than two hours from now. Should we not know by now if it is a confidence vote?

I would like my hon. colleague to share her thoughts on that.

[English]

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague. I would like to also thank the Bloc Québécois for standing strong and voting against this abuse of democracy today.

This is a really good point that we need constituents at home to hear. The Prime Minister today decided that this vote is going to be a confidence vote. If members do not vote in favour of his motion, he is going to call an election. That is his respect for the democratic process today. He is strong-arming his own backbench MPs, who have been saying, “Look, I didn’t want to vote for this but I’m going to have to, because it’s going to be a confidence vote.”

What impact do members think that is having on the NDP as well? They have been very clear that they are not quite sure if they are going to vote in favour, but how are they going to vote against it if it plunges the country into an election? That is the dignity the Prime Minister is giving this House. That is his respect for democracy.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the wonderful member for Kildonan—St. Paul. We share space in the same province.

I want to talk a little about the finances. We know that prominent Republicans in the U.S. have voiced their support for the protest, including Donald Trump. Ottawa police are concerned with the significant amount of money supporting the convoy. Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton criticized GoFundMe, which he said “failed to deliver Texans’ money”, really demonstrating international interference.

I know the member’s colleagues have talked about supporting protests. Certainly I know about all the visceral anti-indigenous comments that I have had to hear from the Conservative Party over the past couple of days, but I do not think this is about anti-mandate versus pro-mandate—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Kildonan—St. Paul.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague from Manitoba. I have a lot of respect for her and her advocacy.

Although the member did not quite get to her question, I know that members of the House, particularly NDP members, Liberals, and the Greens for sure, have gone to protests. Actually, the leader of the Green Party was arrested for blockading a road to a pipeline construction site four years ago, so should we be freezing her bank account? No, of course we not be freezing her bank account.

I am not looking at the NDP or the Liberals for supporting protests whose leaders have said extreme things on line, but if that is the standard we want to be setting today, by all means people can start digging through their social media feeds and could be finding a ton of extremist language from leaders of protests that many members of the House, including NDP members, have attended.

• (1810)

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what is a good prime minister?

A good prime minister cares about all of the people and all of the citizens he represents. A good prime minister takes every opportunity to bring people together and build consensus, thereby providing peace and harmony in the social fabric of the nation. A good prime minister will consider numerous factors in making decisions that are in the net best interests of everyone. A good prime minister puts the needs of the nation and its citizens ahead of the needs of

his or her own political interests. This is especially true when issues of gravity and magnitude are before the nation.

A good prime minister de-escalates and reduces tensions and fosters co-operation and agreement wherever possible in the governance of the nation. A good prime minister does what is right and just without demonizing or belittling those who disagree with him. A good prime minister understands the concept of majority rule with respect to minority rights. A good prime minister would admit when he is wrong and change course before it is too late.

I do not believe we have a good Prime Minister. I believe we have a Prime Minister who cares more about his political fate and political future than he does about the needs of his citizens. I believe we have a Prime Minister who looks at moments of crisis as political opportunities to be used for political benefit, rather than managing the crisis and bringing peace and harmony back to the nation. I believe we have a Prime Minister who picks and chooses the facts or the science that supports his ideas and his ideology rather than looking at all sources of information and providing good governance for everyone. I believe we have a Prime Minister who does not understand the consequences of the decisions he makes.

It should have been entirely predictable in mid-August of 2021 that the politicization of mandatory vaccinations would divide the nation. A good prime minister would say this is not an issue that we should be politicizing and that we should never bypass people’s charter rights and freedoms and force law-abiding Canadians to do something they fundamentally disagree with, even if many other Canadians disagree with them.

It should have been entirely predictable that when someone only accepts a particular source of science that confirms their beliefs and rejects and challenges all other sources, they are bound to make mistakes and fail the citizens of their country. I am referring to the science of mental health. Right now our nation is struggling. It is one thing to struggle against COVID-19, but it is quite another to struggle against the powers and forces of the people’s own government working against them.

Maslow’s hierarchy of needs is widely accepted in the field of psychology. It is the theory of human motivation. The bottom of the pyramid of needs is represented by physiological need, such as food, clothing and shelter, as well as the need to belong and to be loved. A good prime minister would know these basic concepts and their impact on Canadians. A good prime minister would know that denying people the ability to travel and see their loved ones, their children and grandchildren, their parents and grandparents and other family members, and to participate in celebrations of life, weddings and other important milestones, would have a detrimental psychological effect on the nation. It is traumatizing.

Statutory Order

A good prime minister would also know that one cannot deprive people of their basic physiological needs: food, clothing and shelter. A good prime minister would never take away the right of his citizens to work and earn a living to be able to pay for food, clothing and shelter for themselves and their loved ones. A good prime minister would not use the powers of the state to coerce citizens to abide by his policies against their free will. A good prime minister ought to know the trauma that this would cause in the population of the nation. A good prime minister would know that this trauma, over a period of months and now approaching two years, would leave people in a position where they have nothing left to lose.

A good prime minister knows that when people are traumatized and in crisis, they have two options: fight or flight. A good prime minister should know that at times like this, his words matter. I think the Prime Minister does know, and he also knows that when he name-calls and degrades Canadians who disagree with him, it hardens people's resolve and inflames tensions.

The mental health and social damage done by the imposition of mandates cannot be measured the same way that COVID cases and hospital counts can be measured, but a good prime minister would know his people and their sufferings and find solutions for all his citizens. It was entirely predictable that the politicization of vaccine mandates would create this trauma and inevitably force Canadians to cower or to fight. A good prime minister would never put his citizens in this position. A menacing prime minister would do this on purpose for his own political gain.

• (1815)

Here we are, with, at best, a careless and reckless Prime Minister who does not understand the consequences of his choices and actions or, at worst, a malicious Prime Minister whose only concern is winning the game of political division, and who is now invoking the most powerful law of the land: a law meant to be used for the absolute worst moments in our nation's history. It is not to be used by a Prime Minister to grab ultimate power to crush those who dissent and would dare stand and challenge him, embarrass him and humiliate him.

This power is immense, but this power has to meet certain thresholds in order for it to be used, and the government has not met that threshold. There is no police action being taken right now where the powers did not already exist for the police to break up blockades and restore peace and order. Every police officer in Canada has the full authority of the Criminal Code, in every part of Canada, to address any crime in progress. The Criminal Code has numerous provisions in it to end blockades and illegal protests. The argument the government is making is that the RCMP needed the ability to write parking tickets and enforce municipal bylaws in order to break up this blockade. A good Prime Minister would know that his citizens are not so stupid as to believe this argument.

However, the most fearsome power the government has claimed is that of using the banks and financial institutions of this country to deny Canadian citizens from effecting transactions from their bank accounts. Everything we do in our lives as citizens requires the ability to transact. Virtually every freedom we exercise as citizens has behind it a financial transaction. We have the right, or at least we used to have the right, to free speech and peaceful assembly, to

worship as we choose and to travel without restrictions in our nation. All of that requires money. We are all, as Canadians, innocent before the law until proved guilty in a court where evidence is cross-examined before a judge, and none of us, as Canadians, could be punished without the due process of law, until now.

By invoking the Emergencies Act, the government has chosen to restrict the freedom to financially transact for those Canadians whom the government disagrees with. Without the freedom to transact, Canadians lose all of their freedoms. Our freedom of speech might involve paying for an Internet service provider, so that we can post messages on social media, paying for the use of a cellphone or a landline, or paying to print signs or brochures. Our freedom to protest would likely involve paying for gas, flights, signs, placards and hotel rooms. Our freedom to worship would include being able to make donations that pay for the salaries of staff and worship leaders, and the facilities they congregate in. All of this now is subjectively enforced by financial institutions without due process according to the whims of the government of the day under this emergency order. A good Prime Minister would never do this.

A good Prime Minister would use the existing laws of the land and the existing institutions of the land to ensure the safety and security of its citizens. The overreach is massive.

The threat to the nation it claims to address is minimal, so much so that numerous provinces have already said they want nothing to do with this massive intrusion on the rights and freedoms of Canadians; so much so that civil liberties associations, members of the legal profession and objective media are questioning this power grab; so much so that even members of his own caucus have stated they are only supporting this measure because it is a matter of confidence before the House, not because it is premised in the letter or spirit of the law.

I will be voting against giving the Prime Minister a continuation of this power. The Prime Minister has menaced the lives and livelihoods of my constituents ever since he was elected in 2015. He has hamstrung any growth, hope or optimism of the natural resource sector in Alberta. He has created tax and regulatory burdens that drive away investment, and created so much uncertainty that capital investment businesses and people have fled central Alberta to more prosperous places in the world. He is menacing our ability to afford home heating, groceries and every other required cost of living for food, clothing and shelter, vis-à-vis his carbon tax and inflation. Seniors, working-class families and those on fixed incomes are being asked to choose between food, medication and shelter. A good Prime Minister would never put his citizens in this position.

Canadians know that protests, blockades and civil unrest are a symptom, not the underlying problem. The problem is that Canadians do not have a good Prime Minister.

• (1820)

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would just politely point out some confusion. The member talks about leaders seeking political advantage, when it was the interim leader of the opposition who actually emailed her entire caucus to say that political advantage should be sought by not discouraging the blockades. That was on day four.

We have heard from many Conservative members about the threat having abated, but I will ask the member, when we have illegal protesters who have been removed from outside this building, but are staging 30 kilometres away; when we have a blockade that was attempted at Windsor on February 16; when we have a blockade that was successfully reinstalled in Surrey on February 18; and when we have an investigation into a hate group that was at the Coutts border, in his very own province, and the investigation into links between that group and what is happening here is still ongoing, would he agree with me that there is still an ongoing threat to the safety and security of Canadians that needs to be addressed through this legislation?

The Deputy Speaker: I need to remind everybody that I have a clock. This is called questions and comments. Normally, on a 10-minute or five-minute round we try to give members a minute or so to ask their question. After the minute, I will cut folks off.

The hon. member for Red Deer—Lacombe has the floor.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, how the Liberal government and Prime Minister have fallen.

Twenty months ago, we went from, “wash our hands and stay home so we can flatten the curve” to vaccine procurement bungling. Then we went to, “get vaccinated or we can’t travel”, to “get vaccinated and still spend two weeks in a hotel against our will when we return to our home country”, to “get vaccinated or lose our jobs”, to “get vaccinated or we don’t even get employment insurance”. Now there is the imposition of this act for the government to hunt down and seize the assets of Canadians based on intelligence from illegally hacked data sources of financial transactions.

This is a gross overreach of power. It is politically—

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments, the hon. member for Kildonan—St. Paul.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my hon. colleague what his thoughts are on the government strong-arming his backbench who do not want to vote for this tonight, and perhaps strong-arming the NDP, whose members have sort of been waffling on whether they are going to vote for it or not. The Prime Minister has made this a non-confidence vote today. If it fails, there may very well be an election.

I would like to hear our colleague's comments on that.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, people who are scared do desperate things.

Statutory Order

The Prime Minister is scared of losing the vote in the House, because he is scared of his own backbenchers. He is not only quelling protests across the country, he is quelling protests within his own caucus.

It is absolutely shameful that the Prime Minister grabs power wherever he can to cover up for his inability to properly govern this country and to cover up the mistakes. The fact of the matter is that he is a weak, ineffective prime minister.

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of the crisis, it seemed there were political considerations underlying the government's radio silence.

My colleague from Red Deer—Lacombe is a whip. Whips ensure that their party members vote according to the party's instructions.

However, we do not yet know of any instructions from the party in power, nor do we know if this evening's vote will be a confidence vote or not. What does my colleague think of this radio silence now?

[English]

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, today at a press conference the Prime Minister suggested, which he did not have the courtesy to do in the House but did so in front of the media, that a matter of this importance would of course be a matter of confidence before the House.

This is again a threat to his own caucus to keep the members in line, and a threat to the NDP. How mightily it has fallen. It is no longer the party looking after the working class. He is strong-arming both the NDP and his own backbench MPs through fear for an election that nobody wants at this time.

• (1825)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this being Family Day in Ontario, I want to start by wishing a happy Family Day in particular to my family, my wife Vanessa, my son Mason, who is probably playing video games right now and my two very young ones, Vivian and Frankie, who are probably watching this. I cannot wait until I get to leave today and come home, but they had better be asleep by the time I get there. I will see them in the morning.

I have been listening to this debate for the past four days, and I have heard a lot of different things being said in the House. I want to get into the details of those, but before I do, I want to take the opportunity to thank the men and women from police forces across the country. The manner in which this operation in Ottawa particularly was handled was nothing short of the gold standard in terms of how policing operations, such as this, need to happen. I thank them for everything that they did to make Ottawa stay safe during the removal of the occupiers.

Statutory Order

I will start by saying I have been perplexed since the beginning of this with the position of the Conservative Party of Canada. It is the party that tells people it stands up for law and order, but the way that it has been responding to this particular issue is absolutely astounding. I am not even talking about this vote or this debate. I am talking about the way that it has responded to everything that has happened within the last three to four weeks.

Members have been encouraging occupiers not to leave, telling them to stay in Ottawa because what they are doing is working, when they know full well that they are breaking the law. That brings me to a very important point. It is this concept of the difference between an occupation and a protest. We have heard, day after day, Conservatives get up in the House and talk about this as a peaceful protest. The member who spoke shortly before me, the member for Kildonan—St. Paul, said it was a lawful protest. It was not a lawful protest. This was an occupation.

I find it remarkable that they would take this position. The irony is that the longer it went on, and the more they encouraged it, the more emboldened those outside became. I have a ton of respect for the NDP member for Windsor West who got up time after time when people, in particular Conservatives and the Bloc, would say there were no problems at the Ambassador Bridge. There were no problems in Windsor. Everything there was fine. He must have corrected the record about 20 to 25 times in the past four days that it was not the case. He said it was only a two-kilometre drive from where he was sitting, but somehow they were not able to take the word from him.

I have heard a number of outrageous and false statements in the House over the last four days. I will start with the one that probably got the biggest reaction out of me. The member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex referred to what was going on over the last three weeks as “Canada Day times a thousand”. She said that. She is quoted in Hansard. Members can see the video. She said that it was like Canada Day times a thousand. Can members believe that? I wonder if the residents of Ottawa feel the same way.

The member for Regina—Wascana, who replaced Ralph Goodale, said in the House, sitting right over there, that he did not see any problem. He said he walked up Metcalfe Street and did not see al Qaeda or the Taliban, as if that is the standard by which the party of law and order measures what an emergency is.

The member for Haldimand—Norfolk said that we somehow live in an authoritarian and totalitarian dictatorship. This is a parliamentary democracy. She is sitting in the House.

The member for Foothills said all that the occupiers at the Coutts border crossing wanted was to be heard. Thirteen people were arrested in conjunction with the seizure of weapons and ammunition.

● (1830)

The member for Abbotsford, although he is just one example, as so many of them said it, referred to what is going on right now as martial law. Martial law is when the military is literally walking on the street. Martial law means the military has taken over the civil duties of the police. That is absolutely ridiculous.

I have heard from a number of members, including the member for King—Vaughan, who talked about bank runs, suggesting that there will be bank runs out there, because people suddenly want to take all the money out of their accounts. If that happens, it would be based on the misinformation that they have been spreading.

The member for Grande Prairie—Mackenzie talked about suspending civil liberties. That is conflating the War Measures Act, the previous act, with what we actually have in the Emergencies Act.

I want to talk about the Emergencies Act. The Emergencies Act was actually brought in by a Progressive Conservative government. Do not for a second think that those who are sitting across the way are actually a part of that party. Maybe you are, Mr. Speaker, but the rest of them are not.

The bill was seconded by my predecessor, Flora MacDonald, a true Progressive Conservative. It was nothing like the War Measures Act. The only connection it had to the War Measures Act was that it was meant to remove it.

It specifically says, and this is how it differs, that it is temporary. It is for 30 days or less, and it is subject to quick Parliament review. It takes 20 members to sign and ask for another debate. It is targeted and used only where needed. The War Measures Act was not. The Emergencies Act is proportionate. The responses used by the authorities within that act need to be proportionate to what the emergency is. The War Measures Act did not have that.

Most importantly, it upholds civil liberties. It upholds the Charters of Rights, which the War Measures Act did not do.

The member for Grande Prairie—Mackenzie said it suspends civil liberties, but that member knows better, because that was the War Measures Act and this is not the War Measures Act, despite the fact that many Conservatives have no problem conflating the two.

What does the invocation of the act accomplish? The most important thing, to me, and I have not heard anybody else saying that any other piece of legislation could have handled this, is that it made it illegal to bring a child into what was going on out front of this place.

It made it a criminal offence to do that. Why would anybody be against that when we saw what we witnessed out there for three weeks?

It restricted entry so that it allowed police to set up checkpoints, like they did around Ottawa, so that if someone's intention, their sole intention, is to come into Ottawa to participate in this demonstration and this occupation, they would not be allowed to do so.

It allowed for the seizure of money and trucks, and I will say, when it relates to the seizure of money and particular bank accounts, it is temporary and it needs to be continually reviewed.

To get to the point of the member for Kildonan—St. Paul, the RCMP issued a statement today that said it has only turned over to financial institutions the names of the organizers and the names of those who had trucks or vehicles on the streets that were not removed. The member did not read the RCMP statement from today. If a member does not believe that to be true, they are blatantly saying the RCMP is lying to the public.

It also allowed for officers who were outside Ontario to be brought into Ontario, to be used in a jurisdiction outside their home province. I know Conservatives will say that all of this stuff could have been done with other laws, but guess what? Nobody else did it. The province did not want to do it.

● (1835)

In order to bring officers from Quebec into Ontario, there would have had to have been an agreement between the Ontario minister responsible and the Province of Quebec. They did not do that. What did Doug Ford do? He asked the federal government to please invoke the Emergencies Act so it could take care of this. That is exactly what happened.

I want to talk about some of the people who support this motion today.

The Conservative Party of Canada has a new-found admiration for Tommy Douglas. They have invoked his name more in the last four days in the House than I think they have since Tommy Douglas himself was here. By the way, Tommy Douglas's opposition was to the War Measures Act, not to the Emergencies Act.

I will read a quote from a modern-day NDP leader who is actually talking about the Emergencies Act. This is—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I know there is an impassioned speech going on, but that is the challenge. We are getting close to the end, and I want to make sure everybody gets an opportunity to speak. This is a 20-minute period of debate. There will then be a 10-minute period for questions and comments. Let us save this until then.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, Ed Broadbent said:

...we've heard of the importance of following the money. With the use of the Act, the federal government is able to do just that. The...Emergencies Act give[s]...the means needed to stop any flow of funds that could have made the situation much worse.

This is Ed Broadbent, a modern-day NDPer, who is talking about this act, not the War Measures Act. Even if some Conservatives are not going to listen to the NDP, I will quote some comments from their own.

This is Senator Vern White and Peter Mackay. They issued a joint statement, which states:

what we have seen in the occupation of Ottawa and blockages at border crossings is not the right of protest enshrined in our constitution, but illegal activity that represents a national security and economic threat to Canada. Leaving aside the stated manifesto of the organizers to overthrow the government, these protests are weakening our economy and disrupting the freedoms of law-abiding citizens.

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Senator Vern White went on to say that he supports the use of the Emergency Measures Act. Those are Conservatives who said that.

The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police has stated:

The [Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police] supports the fundamental objectives of the invocation of the Emergencies Act that is intended to regulate and prohibit illegal public assemblies that lead to the breach of peace, and to restrict the funding of [all] such illegal assemblies.

That was the association of the chiefs of police.

Therefore, forgive me, but when the Conservatives go out and dig up quotes from NDP and Conservative members, and other people from decades and generations ago, I am unwilling to accept that. I would rather listen to the people who know what is going on today.

I will say one more thing. I think it is important to reflect on the people who have actually said that we need the Emergencies Act, that it is important and that the federal government should use it. The chief of police of Ottawa has said that. The mayor of Ottawa said that, and Doug Ford said that.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I hear heckling from across the way. Why is that so important? Those voices matter because they are the voices of the direct jurisdictions that were being affected. It was Doug Ford's province. It was Jim Watson's city, and it was the police chief's area. Those are the people who asked the government to help them.

As we look at how some other provinces reacted to this, I cannot help but think of the hypocrisy of Alberta's premier Jason Kenney. This is a man who, on February 5, wrote a letter to the federal government asking for help. It was a desperate plea, a cry for help, because the province was not able to handle it on its own. This is the same man who a week and a half later, on February 18, said that he was suing the government for sending help. That is literally what happened. It is remarkable.

I want to address the issue of why we still need this. I heard that asked a number of times in question period today. The question keeps coming up. I will preempt it by answering it now so that nobody has to ask me.

Why do we still need this if the streets are clear? What an obtuse way to look at it. If members follow the Ottawa police on Twitter, they will notice that it was just announced that it has reduced the secure area. This is an ongoing operation out there, and it is not done.

Just because the protesters might not be right outside this building right now does not mean that everything has been cleared up. Many of these people are not even that far from here. We hear about how they are congregating in various areas. This is not over.

● (1840)

The incredible work that was done by the police and the special forces out front of this building was remarkable. However, while that work might be done and the stuff that was all over the news might be over in terms of what was sensational, it does not mean that we have completely fixed the problem yet.

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In the last three minutes that I have left, I just want to say that I am very relieved that the creators of this act, my predecessor, Flora MacDonald, had the foresight to say that we need to make sure that there is proper scrutiny to look at the way the act is used, and that is where the inquiry comes in. However, what I find the most interesting part about the way it is worded is that it says specifically that, as part of the inquiry, we have to look into the circumstances that led to the declaration being made.

I am very much interested in hearing about the circumstances that led to this. I am interested in hearing and learning about how this movement began, who was funding it, where the money was coming from, how the coordination worked, who was helping the organizers, who was directing them, who was giving them tips and who was basically counselling them, because I think that this will all be eye-opening to the public. I look forward to that. I look forward to seeing that play out in public. I look forward to the public being able to learn about it and, at the end of the day, I look forward to Canadians knowing, based on that information, based on that inquiry, exactly what happened, rather than hearing these stories we have been hearing from the Conservatives and people across the way.

Before a member of the Bloc asks me a question about confidence or whatnot, I am very confident on my vote on this. I will vote in favour of this, because it is the right thing for Canada and it is the right thing to do.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, three days ago, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association filed an application for judicial review in Federal Court to quash the emergency proclamation, the emergency measures regulations and the emergency economic measures order.

If the court quashes these three emergency measures, does the member believe that the government will accept the court's remedy or will the government appeal the court's ruling?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, it started off as a really good question, but it went off somewhere. The member is asking me to hypothetically, without knowing the arguments or how the judgment was made, answer whether or not an appeal will be made.

I encourage those who think that the charter is being infringed upon to take it to court. The courts will only harden the steel around this particular piece of legislation. That is how we can ensure that the law is being applied, and as we move forward with this legislation, it will better inform how it is done.

The Conservatives come in here and say, "So-and-so is taking this to court." Good, I think that should happen. That is part of our democratic process here. It is part of what makes sure that we have good laws.

• (1845)

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would advise the parliamentary secretary to adopt a tone and attitude similar to that of his colleague from Louis-Hébert, because, in both form and substance as well as in tone, other than creating a distraction, he has not contributed all that much to the debate.

One thing is clear, for instance. We know that there is at least one member on the Liberal side of the House who agrees with us that the proclaimed orders do not meet the requirements or tests needed to invoke the Emergencies Act.

The member for Louis-Hébert has just told us that, if he were to vote his conscience, he would vote against this motion. He has courage. However, he says that he has a moral contract with his party, that this moral contract prevents him from defeating his party, and that he will therefore vote in favour of the motion if it is a confidence vote.

Does the parliamentary secretary have the courage to tell us whether it is a confidence vote or not?

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, the member for Louis-Hébert is more than entitled to have his opinion. The member for Montcalm is totally entitled to have his opinion. It is not the same opinion that I share.

However, to discredit my entire speech, where I actually went back and referenced what other people were saying, based on the fact that this member does not like what I said is completely disingenuous. I spent my entire speech talking about what I heard in the House. I apologize for my opinion being different from this member's and I apologize if the member does not like what I said, but it does not mean that I did not address this particular issue head-on, because I did.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member knows that the NDP is reluctantly supporting this motion, and we will use all the powers at our disposal to hold the government to account while this Emergencies Act remains in place.

I support his denouncing of the gaslighting of the Conservatives, and of the occupation and the convoy itself. However, I do believe there are many Canadians who have been pushed to the margins that are struggling through COVID, like all of us. Many people have been pushed to the margins, and they have not been heard. In fact, there has been divisive rhetoric on both sides. The Liberals are responsible too, for not listening to those Canadians and for not explaining their decision-making around policies on mandates.

I believe our collective consciousness as a Parliament is, right now, at its lowest level of shame and blame and fear. I am scared for our country if we do not bring down the rhetoric and acknowledge the mistakes that have taken place.

What will the member do to bring down the temperature? What will he do to acknowledge the failures of the Liberal government for the sake of our country?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I disagree with the notion that somehow there is a lack of unity in this country.

This country leads developed countries throughout the world in vaccination rates. We have higher vaccination rates than other any developed country in the world. When it comes to the member's question about how we improve the discourse, I am totally open to doing that but I feel like we need to start from a set of facts. I feel that more and more people are bringing things into this chamber that are not even facts. We are starting from a place of misinformation, quite often, and that is where I find the vast majority of my frustration as it relates to the political discourse in the House.

Hon. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that was just a real “Tour de France” style of speech. I would like to offer the member the chance to sum up his support for the motion.

• (1850)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for his hard work.

For me, this comes down to looking at the facts. It comes down to having trust in our government, having trust in our processes, having trust in the people who are advising us and having trust in those who are telling us that, yes, they needed the act and they still need it. I do not think anybody wants this to go on any longer than it absolutely has to. The notion coming from across the way that somehow the government wants to take this and entrench these measures into law is absolutely ridiculous.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think what the hon. member did today in his speech was actually to make a case for not continuing the invocation of the act. He did not provide us with any compelling reason for why it should stay.

When the member talks about how we got here, the reality and the fact is, and this is not misinformation or disinformation, the Prime Minister marginalized, stigmatized, traumatized and divided Canadians by calling them racist, misogynist and extremists. How does that help the public discourse? How does that unite the country? That is my question to the hon. member.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I did address the issue of why this still needs to be in place. I cannot reference a member's presence in the House, but I am aware of when people come and leave the chamber, and I can tell the member that I absolutely mentioned this.

I talked about the fact that this is an ongoing operation. The operation has not been shut down yet. It is quite clear there are other problems, like out in B.C. right now, and other areas that might see flare-ups. I trust those, and I am not talking about just cabinet, who are advising and making sure that all the tools are in place in order to complete this operation.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a Liberal member told us earlier that he would vote differently if it were a confidence vote.

We have been asking the Liberal members for an hour, and we are one hour away from the vote, but no one on their benches can tell us whether it will be a confidence vote or not.

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Is the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons close enough to the Liberal leadership to tell us whether this vote, to be held in one hour, will be a confidence vote? I do not care if he thinks that it is important that it be a confidence vote; I just want him to tell us, yes or no, whether it will be.

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, no, it is not important to me if it is a confidence vote. I am going to vote for it. Every other member in the House could vote against it, but I am still going to vote for it.

I understand where the Conservative and Bloc members have been coming from for the last hour and a half. The coalition that exists there, I get where it is coming from, but it is irrelevant to me. It does not matter to me. I am going to vote in favour of this because I believe it is the right thing to do.

The Deputy Speaker: We are out of time.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Montarville.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if nothing else, that speech by my colleague from Kingston and the Islands was amusing. He seemed critical of the Conservatives for not paying tribute to Tommy Douglas before he was even born.

Actually, I would like to take a moment to pay tribute to my House of Commons colleagues of all stripes on both sides of the aisle who went to the trouble of participating in this weighty social debate by clearly and openly expressing their points of view.

It is a crying shame that this weighty debate is being undermined and warped by the threat of a confidence vote. That is a crying shame because it sends a message to the people that, if Parliament does not do what the Prime Minister wants it to do, it will send Canadians back to the polls. That is a terrible thing because it forces the hand of people like the member for Louis-Hébert, who would vote differently otherwise. It impairs our debate here in the House.

I would like to talk about another Liberal first minister who tried to use divisive tactics and a social crisis to score political points. I am talking about Quebec's Jean Charest, who exploited the student uprising during the “maple spring” of 2012 in an attempt to score political points.

That did not go well for him because in the next election, Quebecers elected a Parti Québécois government, in which I had the honour to serve. We were the ones who had to deal with the consequences of the previous Liberal government's actions. The unprecedented social crisis was resolved without asking the federal government to invoke the Emergencies Act.

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We did what we had to do. We decided to sit down with the students to discuss the issue of university funding and students' contribution through tuition fees. We made tough decisions, which I can confirm, as I was the Quebec minister of public security at the time. On May 8, 2013, I announced the launch of what was known as the Ménard commission. I was harshly criticized by police forces and student associations, but the last protest of the “maple spring” was held on May 8. That was one year later.

Why? It was simply because we decided to take the bull by the horns and listen to people despite the criticism. The Ménard commission looked into what could have sparked the senseless violence. The commission released a report that was quickly shelved by the next Liberal government, for good reason.

I like to think that the exemplary conduct of the Ottawa police in ending this illegal occupation of downtown streets was greatly inspired by the findings of the Ménard commission on the use of force during protests and public disturbances.

• (1855)

They did their job without violence and without any need for the Emergencies Act. All that needed to be done was to take the time to put measures in place to get out of the crisis. That is what we did.

Governing involves making decisions. Choosing not to make a decision is making a decision. At the beginning of this crisis, the government chose not to make a decision and that had serious consequences. I heard a Liberal member say that his government made a decision but that we just did not like it.

After letting the situation grow worse and worse for about 20 days, the government decided to invoke the Emergencies Act to deal with the situation. That was the nuclear option, so to speak. The government did not try anything else first. It is using the nuclear option to cover up the fact that it failed to take action for more than 20 days. That is shameful.

No one can tell me that the solution the government is presenting is the only solution. The government had a lot of options available to it, but it chose not to use them. It has to take the blame for that. We will not be party to the government's attempt to cover up its pitiful management of the situation so far and regain the public's favour by supporting the invocation of the Emergencies Act.

I would like to reiterate what my colleague from Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia said in the House on February 14, seven days ago. She said that it took the government 10 days to convene a trilateral table, but it forgot to invite police departments. On day 16, they ended up creating their own integrated command centre.

Contrary to what we did following the social crisis of 2012-13, the Prime Minister never bothered to enter into communication with the occupiers of Parliament. He did not co-operate when the Government of Ontario and the City of Ottawa requested 1,800 officers to deal with the situation. He did not set up a crisis task force including all levels of government and all the police forces.

One thing that justifies our position today is that the government did not consult its partners, meaning Quebec and the provinces, before making a decision that is so heavily laden with consequences.

Of the 10 provinces in this country, there are only three that support the government's action. That speaks volumes to me.

To invoke the Emergencies Act, the government must demonstrate two things.

First, it must show that there is a dangerous and urgent situation. Even if we accept, based on what the member for Kingston and the Islands just told us, that the situation could remain potentially dangerous, can we still claim this evening, a few minutes from voting time, that it is urgent? The answer is only too obvious.

Second, the government must show that it is impossible to deal with the situation under ordinary laws.

• (1900)

What the government did show was that it never tried using ordinary laws to deal with the situation. Can it really say after the fact that it would have been impossible to deal with it using ordinary laws? The government took great care not to apply any ordinary laws before invoking the Emergencies Act.

Two criteria must be satisfied for the government to proclaim the Emergencies Act. They were not. As such, we cannot support the act because the government did not prove it was absolutely necessary.

The Prime Minister explained that he invoked the act in case other blockades appeared. I would note that nearly all the blockades except for the Ottawa occupation were dismantled before the Emergencies Act took effect. In other words, the situation in downtown Ottawa could have been dealt with using ordinary laws had the government bothered to try. The government took great care not to, however. It said it was invoking the act in case other blockades appeared. An act should not be invoked just in case. An act should be invoked when there are reasons for it, such as having to manage a real or imminent situation, not just in case.

It would have been possible to handle the situation by coordinating the Ottawa police, the OPP and the RCMP in their enforcement of the existing laws and regulations, such as the Criminal Code, the Highway Traffic Act, City of Ottawa bylaws, for example, regarding peace and quiet for residents, but no. Instead, the government did nothing for nearly 20 days, before invoking the Emergencies Act to deal with something it could have dealt with if it had just tried. The government never did try to deal with it.

It is very clear that we will not be able to support the use of this act. I have to say that, as a Quebecker, I am even more troubled by the government's decision to invoke the Emergencies Act to deal with this situation. No matter what the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House claims, the Emergencies Act is a revamped version of the War Measures Act. The government at the time tinkered with and rejigged the act to make it more acceptable and palatable. The misuse of this act, most notably in 1970, was deemed completely unacceptable in a democratic society that upholds the rule of law.

Quebec still has painful memories of the times the War Measures Act was invoked, for the First World War, the Second World War or the October crisis in 1970. This is because every time this act was used, it was against Quebec, in 1917, 1942 and 1970. This brings up all kinds of painful memories.

• (1905)

Beyond the very flawed justification the government is using to urge us to vote in favour of implementing this legislation, there is the somewhat despicable nature of invoking such legislation for a situation like the one that we faced.

Accordingly, there is no doubt in our minds that we on this side of the House cannot condone, cannot support, cannot vote in favour of such legislation. We cannot do it, especially since the National Assembly of Quebec unanimously voted against the application of the Emergencies Act. When we say they voted unanimously, that means with the votes from the Coalition Avenir Québec, of course, but also from the Liberal Party of Quebec, Québec Solidaire, and the Parti Québécois. The Government of Quebec opposed the application of the Emergencies Act. Six provinces joined Quebec in opposing the application of the Emergencies Act.

What does this Liberal government think is left of the collaborative federalism that it tried to sell us on a few years ago if the government is imposing a law with such serious implications as the Emergencies Act without even bothering to consult its most important partners, the Government of Quebec and the provincial governments? What is more, it is imposing it on them against their will.

The governments are telling the federal government not to invoke the act, but it is doing so anyway. Why? The reason is that it was so lax before that now it has no choice but to cover up the fact that it did nothing before and try to resolve the situation.

What we have seen happening in the streets of Ottawa over the past few hours could have easily been done sooner. The police forces could have been coordinated days ago. The government did not do that and the situation got worse.

The government could not see a way out of the situation that it chose to ignore at the start. The government claimed that it was up to the Ottawa police to handle it, when it was obvious that the protesters were not there with a message for the Ottawa City Council or the Government of Ontario. The protesters set up camp in front of the federal Parliament buildings to send a message to the federal government.

The federal government said the protest was not its concern and that it was not responsible for handling it. The protest was against

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the federal government, but it preferred to say it was not responsible for dealing with it. The result was this dreadful and impossible situation that led the government to invoke the Emergencies Act. However, the government's arguments do not in any way justify the use of this legislation.

I will say it again. My Bloc Québécois colleagues and I will be voting against this legislation, not proudly, because there is no reason to be proud of having to vote on this at all today, but because we feel that it is the right thing to do under the circumstances. I would also hope that the Prime Minister will reconsider his perverse idea of making this a confidence vote.

• (1910)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague claims that if the three levels of government had worked together from the beginning, the situation would have been resolved amicably.

However, I would like to quote from an article on the CBC website. It reads as follows:

[English]

“Premier Doug Ford does not think trilateral talks between the federal, provincial and Ottawa municipal governments are necessary since all three levels of government have kept in touch since the protests started.”

[Translation]

What is really disappointing about the Bloc is that it is promoting this false idea that if the government had sat down with the leaders of this illegal protest, everything would have been resolved amicably. As my hon. colleague knows, in union negotiations, for example, if one party asks for the dismissal of the other party, it is quite clear there will be no fruitful discussions.

How, then, can he think—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Montarville.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Speaker, I would like to say to my hon. colleague that there are plenty of people in Canada who would like to boot the Liberals from power.

Many of them come here and ask to meet with ministers, and the ministers meet with them anyway. When a government is elected with about 30% of the popular vote, the majority of the population may want to topple it, remove it or have it resign. However, that is no reason not to speak to people.

That said, I take great exception to this pretext, this attempt to diminish, limit and trivialize the Bloc Québécois's positions because our opposition to the application of the Emergencies Act is not just based on the fact that the Prime Minister hid in his residence.

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• (1915)

[English]

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member is quite right that the conditions that must be satisfied in order to invoke the Emergencies Act were not met and were not even close to being met. Member after member on the side opposite, and their friends in the NDP, downplay and minimize the exceptional nature of this legislation. This is legislation of last resort that provides extraordinary powers to the government that infringe on the civil liberties of Canadians. We are talking about seizing property and freezing bank accounts without due process.

Given how the government has abused its power in invoking this act when the threshold was not being met, could the member speak to the dangerous precedent that the government has set in normalizing the invocation of these extraordinary powers?

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his excellent and important question.

Invoking the Emergencies Act to resolve a civil disturbance that would usually be readily resolved using ordinary means and laws opens the door for a government to invoke it again each time there is another instance of public disorder.

At the beginning of my presentation, I gave examples of social upheaval from the “maple spring” that lasted almost a year. I mentioned the peaceful manner in which we managed to resolve these incidents, without resorting to violence or invoking the Emergencies Act.

Therefore, are we setting a precedent? I believe that this issue merits—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague made a number of very interesting and relevant points in his speech.

As the Bloc's foreign affairs critic, does he not find the foreign and American financial interference to be disturbing? What does he think about the fact that this act allows us to follow the money, as Ed Broadbent said? This money was intended to destabilize democratic institutions. This should concern him, as his party's foreign affairs critic.

Furthermore, I thought that confidence votes applied only to throne speeches, budgets and budget bills. In this case, however, there appears to be a new Liberal category called “whenever the Prime Minister feels like it”.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie for this important question.

Is it okay for Canada's social and political life to be influenced by foreign money? We have never been okay with this, and I certainly hope that Canada never will be.

However, I want to tell my colleague that just because Ed Broadbent said that the Emergencies Act was required to follow the mon-

ey does not make it true. Canada already has tools at its disposal to follow the money and it could have used these tools.

As for the matter of confidence votes, I remind the NDP that, on a simple motion to create a committee to look into the WE Charity scandal, its members voted with the government in order to avoid triggering an election.

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Montarville said that our government should have taken action sooner.

He also said that the main reason why he was voting against the use of the act was that there was not enough consultation with the provinces, which is completely untrue. All of a sudden, my colleague is concerned about provinces other than Quebec. He is so concerned that he renamed the Emergencies Act the War Measures Act.

Would he rather our government infringe on the jurisdictions of the provinces and law enforcement agencies?

• (1920)

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure I understood my colleague's question.

I am not sure what to answer, but I am wondering how the member can claim that the provincial governments were consulted when the provinces are saying they were not. Where was he? Was he hiding in the closet watching as the federal government consulted the provincial governments?

The member can say whatever he wants, but the fact is that the act was invoked without the consent of seven of the provinces. I am saying that—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Thérèse-De Blainville.

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. friend for his passionate, fascinating and informative speech.

Yesterday I mentioned the Maple Spring, a big social crisis that occurred in Quebec. I was wondering whether the Emergencies Act, which we will be voting on today, would have applied to Quebec. Indeed, the act states that it will be enforced throughout Canada, regardless of what the provinces and Quebec think of it.

There is a big elephant in the room. The Prime Minister made a thinly veiled threat about this being a confidence vote. Shortly after that, in the media, the NDP leader gave his unequivocal support to this motion.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Speaker, my colleague raises an important question about the fact that the government decided to invoke this legislation and make it apply generally throughout Canada, when the problem was entirely localized in downtown Ottawa.

Given that some governments had already expressed their opposition to the act being enforced in their territory, I think it would have been simple for the federal government, in the spirit of co-operation, to limit the scope of the act, as I mentioned earlier. However, it chose not to do so, regardless of what the provinces had asked of it.

[English]

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a century ago, Viscount Haldane created the emergency doctrine of the peace, order and good government clause of the Constitution. At the time, he indicated that in peacetime, when that clause was used to create legislation, the onus was on the government to justify the use of that extraordinary power. Justice Laskin, in the Anti-Inflation Act reference case, seemed to suggest the same.

Does my hon. colleague feel that this jurisprudence applies to the CCLA court case that is currently working its way in front of the court? The Canadian Civil Liberties Association—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Montarville.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

It is indeed a fundamental question: can we invoke legislation of this nature when we are in a peaceful situation, there is no armed conflict or state of war?

As I mentioned in my speech, I think indeed that in such a situation, the onus is on the government. In this case, the government has not succeeded at any time to demonstrate to us that the act was necessary.

If it is not necessary, we must vote against it.

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge the important interventions of my colleagues across all political lines throughout the weekend and today. We are all tired. Canadians are tired.

I want to make sure it is unequivocally clear that NDP members are taking the use of the Emergencies Act very seriously. We have been unequivocally clear that if we vote in favour of the government's request, as we will tonight, it is not a blank cheque. We are very reluctant here. We are not supporting it because we want to, but because of the failure of leadership from all levels of government, which led to this point. The government will have to stay within the established powers or we will withdraw our support. We have made that unequivocally clear.

I want to speak a little about the main group that organized this protest, this convoy. They came to Ottawa. They issued a memorandum of understanding, which is a pseudo-legal document. It called for the establishment of a committee with the Governor General and individuals appointed by Canada Unity, which would have had the power to override all levels of government and to dissolve the democratically elected Government of Canada if it did not follow through on the MOU.

Statutory Order

This is unacceptable. They called on the Prime Minister to dissolve Parliament. We can all agree that this is a failure of the leadership of the convoy as well to make that declaration. It is certainly not a way to get a meeting with the Prime Minister and the government.

This is the first time the Emergencies Act has ever been used since it was created over 30 years ago. The NDP agrees that it should continue to be avoided as much as possible. It is very clear that we do not want to use this tool. This is, again, as a result of the failure of all levels of government, including our Prime Minister, to show leadership to keep Canadians safe over the past few weeks.

What we face right now are illegitimate protests. They have not been peaceful. There has been an illegal occupation. People in residential areas of Ottawa have been harassed. People do not feel safe in their own homes. There have been reports of attempted arson of a residential building. The convoy has given itself unlawful powers to detain people. We have seen large numbers of firearms confiscated in Coutts, Alberta. This cannot continue to escalate further. It has to stop.

I understand the concerns people have about the potential impacts of the use of emergency measures legislation. I have those concerns, too. I have seen Liberals and Conservatives abuse their power in the past. I have seen their governments attack rights of indigenous peoples and workers, as examples. That is not what we are talking about here. We are talking about an illegal occupation that has gone on for three weeks. It has had a huge impact on people.

The NDP will use all powers at its disposal to hold the government to account while the Emergencies Act remains in effect.

I did hear a Conservative member say that the NDP is the party of the working class and that it has abandoned them. That is not true. We are not abandoning the people of Ottawa. We are not abandoning the workers of Ottawa. We are not abandoning automobile workers in Windsor, Ontario, and workers across this country. We want to make sure there is a clear flow of goods and services so that businesses can continue to operate.

I heard the leader of the official opposition initially say, "I don't think we should be asking them to go home", and that we need to turn this into the Prime Minister's problem. I had a person from my community say the same thing to me. Paul reached out to me and said, "Let the Prime Minister sink on this." I can tell you, as a New Democrat I will never let someone be harmed for political gain. We as New Democrats will not do that. We will stand up for Canadians, for health care workers, indigenous peoples, people suffering across this country. We need to stop the division.

Statutory Order

I know the Conservatives like to tell the story that this is not well supported. Again, I made it very clear that Peter MacKay, a former Conservative defence and justice minister under Stephen Harper, thinks that this meets the bar and that this should be supported, as does Vern White, a Conservative senator, the former chief of police of Ottawa, as does Prime Minister Harper's own senior security adviser. The Premier of Ontario is a Conservative and he supports the implementation of the Emergencies Act to relieve the citizens of Ottawa and the City of Ottawa.

How can all levels of government be ignored, including first nations? First nations in my own province, the First Nations Leadership Council in British Columbia, the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs, and the B.C. Solicitor General support this.

We need to move forward. We need to end the division in our country, and stop the flow of misinformation and foreign money.

• (1925)

I see it is time to go to a vote.

I urge us all as Canadians to come together and drop the rhetoric. I know the Prime Minister said a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian. It is time for all of us to include each other, drop the rhetoric and try to heal as a country.

• (1930)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: It being 7:30 p.m., pursuant to order made Thursday, February 17, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the motion now before the House.

The vote is on the motion.

[*English*]

If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes to request a recorded division or that the motion be adopted on division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the chair.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I would request a recorded vote.

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

• (2000)

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, the eyes of the nation are upon us tonight. Earlier today, the Prime Minister signalled, as did a member of his back bench, that tonight's vote is a confidence vote. Convention requires the Prime Minister to publicly declare a confidence vote of this nature as such, following convention.

My question for the government House leader is this: Is the vote tonight a confidence vote? If the vote is lost, will the Prime Minister plunge us into an election?

Hon. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the debate but it is time to vote.

• (2020)

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(*Division No. 32*)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Ali	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Atwin
Bachrach	Badawey
Bains	Baker
Barron	Battiste
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaikie
Blair	Blaney
Blois	Boissonnault
Boulerice	Bradford
Brière	Cannings
Carr	Casey
Chagger	Chahal
Champagne	Chatel
Chen	Chiang
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Collins (Victoria)
Cormier	Coteau
Dabrusin	Damoff
Davies	Desjarlais
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diab	Dong
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dzerowicz
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith	Fergus
Fillmore	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fragiskatos	Fraser
Freeland	Fry
Gaheer	Garneau
Garrison	Gazan
Gerretsen	Gould
Green	Guilbeault
Hajdu	Hanley
Hardie	Hepfner
Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Idlout	Ien
Jaczek	Johns
Joly	Jones
Jowhari	Julian
Kayabaga	Kelloway
Khalid	Khera
Koutrakis	Kusmierczyk
Kwan	Lalonde
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lattanzio	Lauzon
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lightbound	Long
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney	Martinez Ferrada
Masse	Mathysen
May (Cambridge)	May (Saanieh—Gulf Islands)
McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty
McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod	McPherson
Mendès	Mendicino
Miao	Miller
Morrissey	Murray

Naqvi
Noormohamed
Oliphant
Petitpas Taylor
Qualtrough
Rodriguez
Romanado
Sajjan
Samson
Scarpaleggia
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Brampton East)
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Sarai
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Sorbara
St-Onge
Tassi
Thompson
Turnbull
Van Bynen
Vandal
Virani
Weiler
Yip
Zarrillo

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif
Albas
Arnold
Barlow
Barsalou-Duval
Benzen
Bergeron
Bérubé
Blanchet
Block
Brassard
Brunelle-Duceppe
Caputo
Chabot
Champoux
Cooper
Danco
DeBellefeuille
Desbiens
Doherty
Dreeschen
Ellis
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Fast
Findlay
Gallant
Gaudreau
Genuis
Gladu
Goodridge
Gray
Hoback
Kelly
Kmieć
Kramp-Neuman
Kusie
Lantsman
Lawrence
Lemire
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Lloyd
MacKenzie
Martel
McCauley (Edmonton West)

Aitchison
Allison
Baldinelli
Barrett
Beaulieu
Bergen
Berthold
Bezan
Blanchette-Joncas
Bragdon
Brock
Calkins
Carrie
Chambers
Chong
Dalton
Davidson
Deltell
Desilets
Dowdall
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Epp
Falk (Provencher)
Ferreri
Fortin
Garon
Généreux
Gill
Godin
Gourde
Hallan
Jeneroux
Kitchen
Kram
Kurek
Lake
Larouche
Lehoux
Lewis (Essex)
Liepert
Lobb
Maguire
Mazier
McLean

Statutory Order

Melillo
Moore
Morrice
Motz
Nater
O'Toole
Paul-Hus
Perkins
Plamondon
Rayes
Reid
Richards
Rood
Savard-Tremblay
Schmale
Shields
Simard
Small
Steinley
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Morrison
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Patzner
Pauzé
Perron
Poilievre
Redekopp
Rempel Garner
Roberts
Ruff
Scheer
Seebach
Shipley
Sinclair-Desgagné
Soroka
Ste-Marie
Strahl
Thériault
Thomas
Tolmie
Uppal
Vecchio
Vien
Vignola
Vis
Warkentin
Webber
Williamson

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

The hon. leader of the official opposition has a point of order.

Hon. Candice Bergen: Mr. Speaker, I file with you, pursuant to section 59 of the Emergencies Act, a motion to revoke the Prime Minister's emergency declaration that was proclaimed last week.

In accordance with the act, the motion is signed by more than 20 members of the Conservative Party. This motion—

The Deputy Speaker: The Leader of the Government in the House of Commons is rising on a point of order.

Hon. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, as you are aware, there was a House order that the House would adjourn after the vote.

The Deputy Speaker: I will let the hon. member finish her point of order.

Hon. Candice Bergen: Mr. Speaker, we will consider the matter at the next sitting week.

I say this to all Canadians: Conservatives will continue to use every tool at our disposal to end the Prime Minister's—

The Deputy Speaker: The chief government whip is rising on a point of order.

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, this is not a point of order.

Hon. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to take the time to thank the staff who stayed over the course of the weekend, the clerks and the House administration. It has been a long hour. This has been a historic debate. We should thank all of the people for their incredible service.

Statutory Order

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Monday, February 28, at 11 a.m., pursuant to Standing Orders 24(1) and 28(2).

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: It being 8:23 p.m., pursuant to order made Thursday, February 17, the House stands adjourned until

(The House adjourned at 8:23 p.m.)

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